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UPON A CAST

BY

CHARLOTTE DUNNING

"I will stand the hazard of the die"
KING RICHARD III.

"For May wol have no slogardie a-night
The seson priketh every gentil herte
And maketh him out of his slepe to sterte"
THE KNIGHTES TALE

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE
1885

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TO

M. M., OF ROTTERDAM

"TER HERRINNERING AAN DE DAGEN IN HET AHRTHAL DOORGEBRACHT"

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UPON A CAST.

Prologue.

When Oliver Floyd reached London, he secured rooms at Morley's Hotel, and then drove at once to his bankers. While waiting for the clerk to bring the forty pounds he had demanded, he chanced to glance at the visitors'-book that lay open on the counter before him, and two neat signatures caught his eye. He studied the names and address, he pulled his mustache, he frowned, and looked blankly at the clerk who held out to him his letter of credit and his money. With an anxious, deprecatory smile he chose a shining new coin, tossed it up, and caught it in his palm. This he did a second time, and then went out to his waiting cab. Because the coin had twice fallen with the profile of her majesty upward, he bade the cabman drive him to the Langham Hotel. He obeyed the queen's command.

Chapter I.

Spring is usually compared to a fickle maiden, all tears and smiles; but the spring of the year eighteen hundred and eighty blustered into New York like an old curmudgeon who has learned how to be disagreeable in a variety of ways, and has resolved to be disagreeable in all those ways at once. On this first day of April there was a flurry of snow, a sardonic

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gleam of sunshine, a dash of hailstones; but towards noon the weather ceased fooling, and a pitiless rain began to pour down.

Among the many women housed by the storm were two ladies sojourning at a small hotel that overlooks Madison Square. They had arrived in February, and one day when they went to the office for letters, the clerk asked them to register their names and residence. The elder lady gingerly took the pen he offered; she shook off a drop of ink, she put the blotter under her hand, and finally she wrote "Mrs. Gustav Milinowski." She dotted the i's and crossed the t, she filled in the space that demanded the date, and then she turned to her companion with an air of profound perplexity—"But where do we live?" she said. "Live?" the other repeated. She took the pen and wrote "Miss Caroline Lester, U.S.A."

That had happened nearly six weeks ago. To-day these vagrant ladies sat in a snug, private parlor of the hotel, their chairs drawn close to a blazing soft-coal fire. Mrs. Milinowski was knitting, sending the steel needles back and forth with mechanical swiftness and precision. It is lotos-eating sort of work; it needs no looking after, and while the skilful knitter makes a brave show of industry, she is in reality almost idle, and building air-castles perhaps, perhaps going over her cash account. It was more likely to be the cash account in this instance, for Mrs. Milinowski was practical rather than poetical. Twenty years under the marital rule of a Prussian army-officer would make most women practical, but Mrs. Milinowski took kindly to the prose of life. She was

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born and bred in New York, yet her native town was foreign to her, for she had lived in Berlin after her marriage, and become an ideal German *hausfrau*. Her husband, who at the time of his death bore the title of colonel, had such a profound pity for rich Americans that he strove to make them all Prussians, and he benevolently married several of his wife's nieces to German gentlemen of greater rank than fortune. Her only nephew, John Lester, followed the example of his cousins, married the daughter of an impecunious baron, and took up his residence in Hamburg. Two years later, his sister Carol, on the death of her widowed mother, quitted New York and came to Berlin, where she was welcomed as a daughter by the childless Milinowskis. It seemed at that time as though Prussia might annex the entire Lester family and its wealth, but Carol bravely withstood the charms of budding barons and slim lieutenants, and remained an independent American. She had been in Berlin nearly five years, and had passed her twenty-first birthday, when Colonel Milinowski died.

"When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions."

Hardly a month after the brave soldier and gallant gentleman had been buried with the military pomp befitting his rank and title, John Lester and his wife were lost at sea. Mrs. Milinowski and Carol waited with bated breath, each fearing that she might lose the other, and often in the silent watches of the night the widow stole softly to her niece's bedside, and bent

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down to hear if she still breathed. John Lester's little daughter, Leila, who had not been with her parents on that ill-fated vessel, was brought to the desolate Berlin house, and the two women took the child, and strove by travel to dispel the sorrow that had fallen so heavily upon them. They wandered southward, and spent the winter in Rome, where Carol caught the fever, and went down to the very gates of death. As soon as she was able to travel, she had but one wish—to return home, and home to her meant New York. They journeyed slowly to London, and there Oliver Floyd found them, because the fall of a new coin had bidden him go and see the aunt and sister of his old friend, John Lester. He became the protector of these helpless, perplexed, disheartened women. He disentangled their business affairs, he took up cudgels in their defence when all the tribe of Milinowski swooped down to carry the runaways back to Prussia, and finally, in February, he sailed with them for America. So it happened that on this first day of April, Mrs. Milinowski and her niece were seated in a private parlor of the little Madison Square hotel.

At forty-six, the widow was a portly, imposing dame, with a somewhat heavy face and abundant black hair. As she knitted, she glanced now and then at the clock, for the luncheon hour was drawing near, and she had a healthy desire to hurry the hands onward. Outside, the rain beat down steadily and dulled the roar of the street.

In a low chair near the fire sat Carol, leaning forward a little, her hands clasped about her knees.

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She was the ghost of her former self. Her black dress hung on her loosely, and the sleeves fell in folds along her thin arms. There was no color in her face; even her lips were pale, and beneath her eyes were the blue circles that the Italians call *calami*. The sorrowful droop of her mouth showed that her thoughts were not merely of the agreeably miserable sort that dull weather is apt to engender, and a murmuring fire to foster. She smiled with self-pity as she saw how loosely her rings hung on her fingers; but the smile went out as quickly as it came, for each ring brought a memory. This one had been her mother's, this her brother had given to her, and this Colonel Milinowski had bestowed on her solemnly, declaring that it had been blessed by the Pope. All the Milinowskis were Romanists, and Mrs. Milinowski had placidly been converted at the request of her husband; but Carol was made of more stubborn stuff, and remained true to the faith of her fathers.

Presently a little girl opened the door, and viewed the room and its occupants with evident discontent. Mrs. Milinowski smiled at her absently, but Carol turned and stretched out her hand.

"What is it, Leila?" she asked. Leila heaved a great sigh of despair.

"Oh, I don't know what to do, Aunt Carol. I can't go out; I wish I was home; I wish I had somebody to play with me."

"I'll play with you," Carol said.

"No; I want a little gray cat, like the one there was on the ship," said Leila, ungratefully. She

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spoke in the careful, deliberate fashion of a child who is brought up among adults, and in her pronunciation there was neither lisp nor stutter. Her aunt smiled sympathetically, and tried to lift her on her lap, but Mrs. Milinowski interposed.

"Don't overtax your strength, Carol; and, Leila, come and wind this ball of worsted for me."

So saying, she put the skein over her hands, and Leila began to wind the ball, disentangling the strands with old-womanly deftness. Carol went to her rescue at a perilous moment, and again a long silence ensued. A step was heard in the corridor just as the ball was wound, and at the sound Carol started up from her kneeling posture, and Leila ran to open the parlor door. A gentleman entered, who kissed the child and shook hands with the two ladies.

"What luck, Mr. Floyd?" Carol asked.

"Good luck," he answered. He was a man of medium height, with iron gray hair and mustache. There was a mixture of shrewdness and good-humor in his expression, and a beggar would ask him for alms, not sure of getting the money, but confident of receiving no brutal rebuff.

"Shall I tell you all about it?" he said, seating himself by the fire and drawing Leila down on his knee. "Well, I found Mr. Dearborne without trouble, and he was gracious enough to show me the house himself. I think you will like it. I asked all the necessary questions about water and gas and taxes, and then I felt at liberty to admire the house. It is in Verplanck Avenue, on the outskirts of the

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town, and it is built of brick in a sort of cottage fashion. If it isn't picturesque, it certainly is very substantial and comfortable. There are lawns all about it, and big trees—a fine place for Leila to romp."

At this mention of her, Leila smiled contentedly. "Is there a little gray cat there?" she asked.

"No; at least I didn't see any, but I don't doubt that Mr. Dearborne would throw in a few gray cats for the sake of clinching the bargain. There is a stable," he continued, more gravely, "and I should think that a coachman who was something of a gardener, or a gardener who was something of a coachman would find just employment enough. Mr. Dearborne told me that the lawns were in excellent order, and that in summer the house was half covered with vines. He assured me, too, that there was plenty of fruit, cherries, pears, peaches, grapes—"

Carol broke in rather impatiently. "What is Mr. Dearborne like?"

"Like a gentleman. His uncle built this house only a few years ago, so it is nearly new. The first floor is reached by six steps from the ground, and there is an excellent cellar. A piazza ten feet wide runs along the south side of the house, from which a fine view of the Hudson can be obtained."

"For further particulars, address Chauncey Dearborne, Newbroek, New York," said Carol. "You are quoting the advertisement word for word; I don't believe you have been to Newbroek at all. Now what is the village like, if you please."

"The village is a quiet town of twenty thousand

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souls," he answered; "and it is very pretty, spreads over a good deal of ground, and brags of its trees and lawns. It doesn't disgrace its mother in point of cleanliness, either. You know it was settled originally by families from Broek, in Holland, and some of the descendants of these families are still in existence—the Vankleecks, the Schoonhovens, the Van Zandts and Brunts, and lots more, mostly Vans. Mr. Dearborne told me all this, and then he said that his mother was a Van Kuffler. I never heard of them, but I suppose that argues myself unknown."

"Delightful!" said Carol. "I dare say they have a family tree. What a pity he is not a Van Kuffler himself! Doesn't that name suggest a picture such as Van Dyck painted—a portrait of a burgher in a ruff?"

"No," said Floyd, "it suggests a tall, handsome young fellow, with a beardless, rather melancholy face, a pair of hawk eyes, and a costume as distressingly common as my own."

Mrs. Milinowski put down her knitting, and looked at Floyd's neat morning suit.

"Your costume is not common," she said, re-assuringly.

"Thank you," he murmured.

All this time Leila had sat on his knee, and drunk in his words.

"Don't you think you would like to live in the country?" he said to her. "What fun you and the little gray cat could have, scampering over the grass once trodden by the historical Van Kufflers."

"Yes," said Leila, with a happy little laugh; "but what's Van Kuffler?"

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"Ah, we don't know, Leila; at least your Aunt Carol and I cannot agree about it, unfortunately."

Again Mrs. Milinowski laid down her knitting. "Van Kuffler, dear, is Mr. Chauncey Dearborne's mother's maiden name."

Leila looked awe-stricken; her eyes grew round, and she said "Oh" in a tone that she strove to make one of satisfaction.

"I must go," Floyd said, standing her gently on her feet. "The very first fine day be prepared, for I shall come and carry you all off to Newbroek. It is not quite two hours' ride in the cars. I think you will like the house; I think your search is over. Meanwhile, if you want me for anything in the world, send for me."

"You must come of your own accord," Carol said, as she gave him her hand.

"No danger but what I shall come often enough. By-the-way, there is a good play running at Daly's. Suppose we three go—" He broke off, horror-stricken, as his glance fell on their black gowns. "I beg your pardon," he added.

"You need not," Mrs. Milinowski said. "We will go to the theatre with you, Mr. Floyd. Carol grows more depressed every day. She brightens up while you are here, but she used to be always gay. Oh, you cannot think how changed she is!"

He glanced towards Carol with pitying tenderness.

"And yet," he said, "she is much better than she was when I first met you there in London. You are not losing heart, Miss Lester, are you?"

"No, no," she answered, impatiently, and frowning

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a little. "If we ever find a house, if we ever can live again — you don't call this living!" she exclaimed, with angry vehemence.

"It is an old story," he rejoined, "of the boy who, when he was asked where he lived, said he didn't live, he boarded. I appreciate that. But this house in Newbroek will please you, I am sure, and once you are there, presto! your color will come back, your spirits will revive, and you will find life worth living again."

"I hope so," she said.

"At any rate, it is agreed that we go to the theatre to-morrow?" and he looked at Mrs. Milinowski, who nodded majestically.

"Dine with us to-morrow at six," she commanded.

"Thank you, I will;" and Floyd then closed the door on himself.

Luncheon was served at once, and as soon as it was on the table, Leila's nurse entered the parlor. She was a tall, bony, blue-eyed Saxon, neatly dressed in black, with a white apron and cap. She knew a little English, but she spoke only German to the child, who had learned that and English together, and glided easily from one tongue to the other.

"Annette," said Leila, gravely, "Mr. Floyd has found a house for us. There are trees and grass and a kitten."

Annette smiled, and looked to Carol for proof.

"It is true," Carol said. "I think that we have found a home at last."

And then Annette clasped her hands. "*Gott sei dank!*" she cried, with pious fervor, for she, too, was tired of playing the vagrant.

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Chapter II.

It was always with great surprise that Oliver Floyd's chance acquaintances learned that he was not a bachelor, and even his old friends half forgot the existence of his wife. He had married very early in life, and two years after the wedding-day his wife went to Europe to visit her mother, who lived in Dresden. She never came back. She wished to stay, and her husband seemed perfectly willing that she should stay. The cause of the separation was not known, although some of Floyd's friends whispered that Oliver's wife had a terrible temper, while others looked ineffably wise, and remarked that Oliver was not cut out for domestic life. Certainly, he had not the air of a broken-hearted man; he ate, drank, and was merry. Mrs. Floyd had been heard to call her husband a brute, but he sent her remittances promptly, let her severely alone, and kept his own counsel. At thirty-eight he was looked upon as a rising member of the New York bar, and was largely consulted by members of the theatrical profession. There was nothing to be said against him, yet a good many women were vaguely uneasy if their sons or husbands found his card parties or Sunday dinners very alluring. He belonged to half a dozen clubs, and he sedulously avoided ladies' drawing-rooms. The wives and mothers and sisters of his friends

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pouted their lips or raised their eyebrows when his name was mentioned, but as he was rich and well-mannered, they might have looked upon him with favor, if it had not been for that irreproachable lady in Dresden.

Promptly at five minutes of six he presented himself in Mrs. Milinowski's parlor. He noticed that Carol had doffed her black dress, and donned a gray one; he saw that she wore low shoes with big silver buckles; and then he became conscious that Mrs. Milinowski was asking him the orthodox question about the weather.

"Yes," he answered, "the rain has stopped. The evening papers tell of great floods everywhere."

"I hope the Newbroek house is safe," said Carol. "If that disappears, we shall have to go back to Europe, and join the clan of wandering American women. We used to meet them when we were travelling, and they always boasted that they lived in a satchel. I could believe it," she added, demurely.

"We should take four trunks," said Mrs. Milinowski. "It is troublesome, but some people are too lazy to be comfortable."

"As the house in Newbroek is high and dry, you need not begin to pack the four trunks," said Floyd. "We can run up and see it to-morrow."

"You need not go with us," Carol said. "Aunt Julia and I could find our way there alone."

"And beard the Van Kufflers in their den? No, I beg leave to go with you; I want to be in at the death, after I have had the excitement of the chase. You have not enjoyed the hunt, Miss Lester. It has

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been a novel experience for me, and whatever is novel is agreeable. I have half a mind to write a book about suburban residences."

"You say that, so that we may not know how bored you really were," Carol said. She looked at him resentfully, and he smiled like an indulgent uncle.

"Oh, you misjudge me. I was as much interested as though I were looking up a house for myself; but it is all over now. I know the Dearborne cottage will suit you, and after this you can register from Newbroek, not the United States at large."

"Thanks to you," she said.

"Thanks to me? Oh no, indeed. If I had not appeared, some one else would have come on the scene. I am afraid you are not a sound logician. Demand creates supply, you know. You wanted a man of business to help you, and I, obeying the universal law, put myself at your command. My volition had nothing to do with it at all."

"Your volition had something to do with coming to see us in London," she said.

"Not much. I rarely look in a banker's register-book; but it so chanced, that morning when I went into Brown's, that the register lay open on the counter. I saw your names in spite of myself."

"Yes, but that did not exactly compel you to come to the hotel," she persisted.

He laughed.

"I give it up. You have cornered me; but it was mere luck that I saw your names, mere luck that I chanced to be in London that week."

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"It was providence!" Carol exclaimed, "and you came like a good angel. Oh, Mr. Floyd, you cannot think how miserably perplexed we were. I was ill and depressed. I thought I was going to die, and I was so eager to be in my own country again, even if it were only to be buried." She smiled as she said this, but there were tears in her eyes. "And we were perfectly helpless, for we had always been looked after and taken care of, and it was appalling to think of crossing the ocean and finding a new home. We did not know how to begin. And then you came—" She put out her hand with a quick gesture, and Floyd took it gently. There was a tinge of color in her cheeks, and on her lips a timid, entreating smile. "And you were Jack's friend," she added.

Floyd held her hand in silence, until Mrs. Milinowski sternly said that dinner was waiting. When the coffee was brought on the table, this martial woman commanded Floyd to smoke, and he obeyed meekly.

"My husband always smoked," she said. "We are accustomed to it, Carol and I. German ladies are not so finical as American."

"And do you call yourselves German ladies?" he said, as he lighted his cigar.

"No," Carol answered. "Why should we? At least, I am not German. Five or six years in Europe could not make one German or French or Italian. I was born here; I lived here until I was nearly sixteen years old. I walked past our old house the other day and it looked very familiar to me. I am

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glad it has not been made a shop, or a restaurant, or something of that sort."

"You ought to have a good many friends here," he said. "Why don't you hunt them up? It would not be difficult to find them."

"I have not energy enough to think of that yet," she said. "Wait until we are settled somewhere or other. Tell me more about Newbroek."

As he smoked, Floyd described the town, drawing on his imagination for picturesque details, and manufacturing anecdotes out of whole cloth. But he succeeded in interesting his listener—he had only one—and from Newbroek the talk drifted to other towns, from America to other continents. At last he smiled, and dropped his cigar in the saucer.

"You are so seriously inclined to hear," he said, "that I shall begin to talk of the Anthropophagi pretty soon, and the men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders."

"Not this evening," said Mrs. Milinowski, gravely. "At least, not if we are going to the theatre."

They took their places in the box just as the leader of the orchestra raised his baton and drew a wail from the violins. The music brought a flush to Carol's cheeks; her eyes glistened, and she read the anecdotes printed on the programme with as much delight as though each were as witty as one of Sidney Smith's. Mrs. Milinowski surveyed the house and the millinery; Floyd seized a fan and nervously created such a gale of wind that Carol begged him to stop.

"Do you see any one you know?" she said.

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"A score of men," he answered. "Look at that tall dandy in the parquette—the one who is staring straight at us."

It was not difficult to pick him out, for he was gazing at Floyd with undisguised amazement. He was a young-faced man, who made up for his bald head by a large mustache and thick whiskers.

"That is Theodore Perry," Floyd continued, and as he spoke, he sedulously studied the programme. "He looks a trifle astonished, doesn't he? To tell you the truth, it is a long time since any of my friends have seen me in a theatre with ladies." She glanced at him curiously, and he added, "Are you not surprised?"

"Oh no," she answered.

"Not surprised? Am I then such a rusty old fellow that you cannot imagine me a squire of dames?"

"You are not so very old," she said, soothingly; and at this he smoothed his gray mustache.

The curtain rose, disclosing a drawing-room scene that set the house to applauding, and a coquettish soubrette began to dust the furniture in a reckless manner, and explain the eccentricities of her mistress. The bald young man in the parquette paid languid attention to the play. The lively sallies of the soubrette were lost on him; the wardrobe of the leading lady had no charm for his eye. He disappeared after a while, and was not seen until the curtain had fallen for the last time, and the throng of people was surging through the lobby. He stood near the doorway, and watched Floyd put Mrs. Milinowski and

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Carol into a carriage; then he strolled away, apparently lost in deep thought.

"We can go to Newbroek to-morrow," said Floyd; and it was agreed that he should call for them the next morning. He walked at once to his own rooms, after dismissing the carriage at the hotel. He lived in a tall apartment-house, and an accomplished Englishman and his wife kept house for him in a manner that made him envied of his friends. This evening when he entered, he found an unbidden guest in the library, lying back luxuriously in a great arm-chair.

"I more than half expected to find you here, Ted," said Floyd. "I saw you in the theatre, and I knew that your curiosity could not keep over-night. Do you want some spirits to put it in?"

"I need something," Mr. Perry said, plaintively. "You owe it to me, Ollie. It was such a shock to behold you in a box with two ladies, and fanning them for dear life. You might have warned me. I told you I was going to the play, and you bade me go and be—you did not say surprised, I am sure."

Floyd laughed, and touched the bell. His servant understood the summons, and entered with decanters, and a discreet smile.

"And biscuits, sir?" he said.

"Yes, and one of those Strasburg pies. Suppose we have a bottle of Chambertin? It goes well with a *pâté*. What do you say to that, Ted?"

"I say that you have been dining out," was the reply. "And I say that those ladies ought to have fed you better. The buxom dame looked as though

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she might handle a fine knife and fork, but the other, the young lady, I fancy lives on Byron and Apollinaris water."

"She nearly died last winter of Roman fever," Floyd said, gravely. "She used to be considered a great beauty. She will be considered a beauty again one of these days, when she recovers her health."

"I used to have hair on top of my head," said Perry, laying his hand on his bald pate, "and mendacious barbers swear that it will grow again, but I don't believe them."

"I am not a mendacious barber," Floyd exclaimed.

"I admit that you are not a barber," Perry said, cautiously. Then he straightened himself and added, with sudden energy, "You are a deceiver; you set up for a misogynist—"

"I never did," Floyd retorted. "You don't know what that word means; you saw it an hour ago in a newspaper, and now you hurl it at my head. What is a gynæocracy, sir?"

"The first syllable sounds rather familiar," Perry answered, knitting his brows. "Where could I have heard it?"

Floyd pushed the bottle towards him, and asked him about the flurry in Wall Street. Perry talked shop for a while with great good-humor, ate the *pâté*, drank the Chambertin, but there was a mischievous look in his pale blue eyes. At last he said, rather hesitatingly,

"Perhaps I—that is, you don't care to have me mention my seeing you with those ladies. I would not have spoken of it to you if I had supposed—"

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Floyd walked into the trap with his eyes open. "Do you remember John Lester?" he said. "He represented Howell and Hume in Europe. Well, he was an old friend of mine. Poor fellow, he and his wife were lost at sea about a year ago, and when I was in London, I found out that his sister and aunt were there. The aunt is a widow. Of course I called, though I swear I hated to; but Jack and I were friends, and a man is bound to do the decent thing once in a while, and these ladies were in a sorry plight—everybody had died, and I—"

"Oh yes," Perry exclaimed. "You looked after the widow and orphan. Just like you, Ollie!"

The idea struck Theodore Perry as exquisitely funny, and he roared with laughter; but Floyd did not even smile. He poured himself out some wine with an air of disgust, and then said, over the top of the glass, "See here, don't you go to Newbroek every now and then?"

Mr. Perry nodded. "I have a cousin living there," he answered, "and I run up to spend Sundays. It is a slow place, but the roads all about are the best in the State, and everybody owns a horse that can jog along at a two-fifty gait. Fact is, the town is rich, and deadly straight-laced, except in the matter of horse-flesh. The men are all deacons, and deacons are as bad as gypsies on a 'swap.' I wouldn't buy a horse of a Newbroek man—"

"Do you know the Dearborne family?" Floyd asked, interrupting him.

"Well, slightly," Mr. Perry answered, with slangy sarcasm. "I went to school with the boys."

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"You went to school with everybody in the country," Floyd said. "I suspect that you only stayed a term at a school, and then moved on. Ted, you would swear that you went to school with Alfred Tennyson."

Mr. Perry laughed. In spite of his bald head and thickly curling whiskers, there was something boyish about him.

"You are severe, Ollie, but all the same, I went to school with Larry and Chauncey Dearborne," he said. "Larry was a young devil," he continued, "and Chauncey wasn't far behind him. Larry, however, is a young devil now, and wisely stays in Paris most of the time; but Chauncey is a bird of a very different color. The old man died a while ago, and left 'em all a lot of money. They've got one sister, and she married Joe Pelham and lives up near the Park in grand style."

"I know Joe Pelham," said Floyd; "that is, I know him as well as I want to. He is the biggest snob in the Stock Exchange. Calls himself a banker now, I believe. He is about as much of a banker as I am. But what does young Dearborne do? — the one that stays here. I made his acquaintance the other day."

"Oh, he is a savant," Mr. Perry answered, airily.

"A what?"

"A savant, sir. He is a scientific man—watches worms, and spears butterflies, and chips off rocks. That sort of thing. He is a regular swell in the learned line. Why, he wrote a book about his travels. I read it. It was full of lions and tigers and

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African sunsets—very interesting. I lent it to somebody and it never came back. You see, he went to a German University for a while, and then galloped off with a lot of crazy Frenchmen to look for the sources of the Nile or explore the Arctic regions, then he wrote this book."

"And in his lucid intervals he attends to the family estate," said Floyd, curling his lip scornfully. "Must be amused, I suppose, and worms and butterflies will do as well as anything else. But it is a new quirk for a young Crœsus. The butterflies they look after are generally fluttering behind the foot-lights."

"Yes," said Perry; "that is where Larry Dearborne finds them." He rose as he spoke, and took his hat from the table. "Going shooting this spring?" he added, irrelevantly. "You asked me to go with you, down to your box in Virginia. I hope you haven't forgotten all about it?"

"Don't believe I shall have time to go shooting this spring," was Floyd's answer, and it made Perry smile.

"Lady clients," he murmured. "*Facilis est descensus Averni.* You will find that in the back of your unabridged. Good-night, Ollie."

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Chapter III.

The train that carried the house hunters up the Hudson was an express, and it sped on its way breathlessly, thundering through cuts in the rocks, rumbling over bridges, and gliding along the edge of the wide, tranquil river. There was a fresh breeze blowing, and sloops and schooners sailed swiftly before it, or tacked from shore to shore. Great steamers pursued their course with sublime indifference to wind and tide, while the skiffs of the fishermen bobbed helplessly about in their tumbling, foaming wake. Lines of low-lying tow-boats crept by slowly, the decks gay with the family washing fluttering in the wind. To the west rose up the gray wall of the Palisades, but this soon broke away in headlands, and the river widened into the Tappan Zee.

"The Dutch sailors used to look for squalls along here," Floyd said to Carol, who was gazing out the window with rapt interest. "You have seen the Hudson before, haven't you?" he added.

She darted an indignant glance towards him. "Of course I have; I wish you would not talk as though I were an emigrant just over from the Schwarzwald. I spent two summers up here on the Hudson, at Catskill." Then she smiled at her petty vexation. "I

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feel so well to-day," she added, "that I am afraid I am rather childish."

"You look better than I have seen you," Floyd said, "but that is partly because you are not dressed in black. I beg your pardon if I am rude, but it makes a great change in you. I noticed it last evening when you wore that pretty violet bonnet."

She colored, and turned towards the window again, and Floyd saw her press her lips together.

"You are not vexed with me?" he said, in so low a tone that Mrs. Milinowski, who was nodding in her chair, could not hear him.

"Not with you—with myself," she answered.

"We outlive everything," he said, gravely. "Before we know it, the past is buried, and we are full of hope for the future. You ought not to reproach yourself. It may seem cruel to say it, but we forget the sorrow that once almost broke our hearts, or if we remember it, it is with calm regret."

"Yes," Carol said, "but I did not think I could."

"So we all think, and so we all forget, except a few, very few men and women, and they are by no means better or truer-hearted than others. I knew a man who lost his wife, and shut himself up and mourned the rest of his days. Yet he did not treat his wife well; in fact, he was a brute to her, and she consulted me once about getting a divorce."

"Then after her death he was conscience-smitten," said Carol. But she smiled, and he was satisfied.

They reached Newbroek about noon, and went to a hotel, where they lunched. The hotel was in the business part of the town, but when they drove off

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to see the cottage, the way led through wide, shaded streets given up to dwelling-houses. Most of these stood on their own grass-plats, and gazed at the world over a neat iron fence. The grass-plats grew into fine lawns, stables peered over evergreens in the background, and the houses put on wings and blossomed out in towers and piazzas. Cobble-stones vanished, and the carriage rolled smoothly over a macadamized road bordered with fine maples. The trees were clothed in the tender, yellow-green of early spring; the grass on sunny slopes was already emerald-hued, and everywhere were crocuses in bloom.

"Look yonder," said Floyd, pointing to a high hedge that enclosed a domain grander than any they had yet passed. The house stood far back on a knoll, but at the great gates was a stone lodge, and a Scotch gardener smoked his after-dinner pipe in the doorway. "In here, driver," Floyd added, and Carol exclaimed, in dismay,

"But this is too large a place for us; we never could afford to buy this, much less keep it up. Mr. Floyd, what are you thinking about?"

"This," he answered, "is where Mr. Chauncey Dearborne lives. He was good enough to say that he would show us his uncle's house himself if we called for him. It is my opinion he will not sell it to you if he does not like your looks. He expects us; I telegraphed to him this morning."

The carriage halted before a rambling, old-fashioned house, and a gentleman came out on the porch. He looked to be somewhere between twenty-five and thirty. He was tall and slim, with the sloping shoul-

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ders that betoken strength. His dark, keen, intelligent face was shaved clean, and burned a healthy color by sun and wind. He wore well-fitting clothes that had never seen a country tailor's shop, and in his button-hole was a green leaf that had sometime mated a flower, but the flower was lost, and only the leaf remained.

"Mr. Dearborne," said Floyd, in an undertone, and then duly introduced him. He raised his hat with a hand that was several shades lighter than his face, but he did not smile or utter a word.

"Will you drive with us to the cottage?" said Floyd.

"It is only a stone's-throw," Mr. Dearborne muttered, in so low a tone that Carol leaned forward involuntarily to hear. He, however, accepted the seat in the carriage, and thus was brought face to face with Mrs. Milinowski, who gazed at him with a cold, stony stare.

"You say that the house we propose to look at is near your own house?" she said.

"Yes, madam," Mr. Dearborne answered, hastily.

"That speaks well for the neighborhood," Floyd remarked; and at this Mr. Dearborne smiled in a perfunctory way.

"It takes more than one family to make a neighborhood," he said. "This part of town is called Quaker Hill, and Quaker Hill spreads over a good deal of space, but I believe all the people call each other neighbors."

"Have you lived here long?" Mrs. Milinowski asked.

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"All my life," he answered.

"That is very satisfactory," she said, looking at him with a critical eye, while he colored a little and then frowned. "When I say that it is satisfactory, I mean that you know it is salubrious," she added, graciously. "You know that the surroundings are all they ought to be."

"Oh yes," he said, smiling in spite of himself. "I think they are all they ought to be, but it is not quite a paradise." Then he frowned again rather uneasily. Mrs. Milinowski seemed to alarm him; evidently he did not know whether she was as much in earnest as she looked, or whether she was of a grimly humorous turn.

The carriage swept up a gravelled approach, and stopped before a low, cottage-like house, painted a blue-gray tint. Carol was the last to leave the carriage, and she paused on the porch, over which jutted a hood, and looked across the sloping lawn to the road. Opposite was a neat little yellow house, and next to that a large, florid mansion, standing in well-kept grounds. To the right was Mr. Dearborne's place, a low wrought-iron fence marking the boundary. She could see the house plainly, and back of it the greenhouses glittering in the sunshine. While she looked, she felt something rubbing against her. It was a little gray kitten.

"It belongs to our coachman, I think," said Mr. Dearborne, as Carol lifted the kitten in her arms. "He generally has a dozen cats and dogs, and I am afraid they come over here a good deal. There is only that low fence between the places."

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"I believe fate has decreed that I should buy this house," Carol said. "See, Mr. Floyd, here is Leila's long-wished-for kitten. You remember she asked if there was one here."

"Yes," he answered, "and I told her that I had no doubt Mr. Dearborne would throw in a kitten to clinch the bargain."

Mr. Dearborne looked more puzzled than ever, but said nothing.

"You will throw in the kitten, won't you?" Carol said.

"Good heavens! yes," he exclaimed.

"Leila," said Mrs. Milinowski, who went through life making explanations, "Leila is my niece's, Miss Lester's, niece. She is a child, and she has wished for a kitten like the one she saw on the ship. We have just returned from Europe, Mr. Dearborne."

"Oh, indeed," he said, stiffly. "Would you not like to see the house?" he added, with a little sarcasm. He unlocked the door and led them into a small, square hall. To the left was a library, to the right a drawing-room, and at the back a dining-room. "The kitchen and laundry are in the wing," he said. Then he left them to wander about as they would, while he went on the porch and smoked a cigarette.

"He thinks we are quite mad," Carol said to Floyd.

"He has fled to the hack-driver for protection," the latter added; and then they both laughed, and followed in Mrs. Milinowski's wake. They went over the house slowly, stopping to look out the

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windows, and peering into every closet—"to see if they could find a skeleton," Carol said.

"You don't take this seriously," Floyd remarked at last, when they had finally reached the laundry. "You think house hunting is a joke to-day. You have been serious enough about it hitherto."

"Ah, but my mind is made up," she exclaimed. "I am superstitious, and I resolved to buy the house the minute I saw the kitten."

"And Mrs. Milinowski?" he added. That lady had put on her eye-glasses and was examining the range, but she answered with energy,

"I think it the very place," she said.

Then they went out to see the stable, Mr. Dearborne going with them and walking beside Carol.

"You find everything satisfactory, I trust," he said, as though suddenly mindful of his duties.

"Yes," she answered, "we like the house very much. We shall be quite settled here before the first of May."

Mr. Dearborne opened his eyes. It was amazing to find a woman buying a house with the nonchalance of a dandy choosing a walking-stick.

"But you have not seen the town yet," he said.

"We shall not live in the town," she returned.

And now he laughed outright.

"You may not like us Newbroek people," he said. "You may find us cold, inhospitable, and disagreeable. I believe we are so considered, and I feel in honor bound to tell you that strangers are not received with open arms."

"I am glad of it," she said. "To tell the truth, I

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should feel very much embarrassed by a warm welcome. I have lived in Germany for the past five or six years, and I should hardly know how to behave in American society, so I am glad to hear that Newbroek will turn a cold shoulder on us."

"Not a cold shoulder, Miss Lester," said Mr. Dearborne, warmly; "at least, only for a little while. And the society here is not so terrible, though I confess I don't find it exactly gay. Still, I do not care much for what is called society."

"You go and see your neighbors informally, I suppose," she said, with a little laugh.

"I have not, hitherto," he answered. "I may do better in the future."

Here Mrs. Milinowski and Floyd caught up with them, and they all looked at the stables, and finally returned to the house. The tour of inspection was over, and Mr. Dearborne closed the carriage-door on them.

"Good-bye," he said, taking off his hat. "If you buy the cottage I shall apotheosize the gray kitten."

"Don't do anything so dreadful," Carol said. "Keep it and give it to Leila."

His frank smile lighted up his face again. "Trust me; the kitten goes with the cottage—a dozen kittens."

"A very fine-looking young man," said Mrs. Milinowski, as the carriage drove off.

"Rather a Napoleonic profile," Floyd added. "He thaws out slowly; but, Miss Lester, you managed him very well. I really think he will condescend to sell the house to you."

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"It is I who condescend to buy," she retorted.

They reached the station just in time for the five-o'clock train, and Mrs. Milinowski dropped asleep the minute she took her seat in the car.

"Are you too tired to talk?" Floyd asked, as Carol leaned back wearily in her chair.

"Not too tired to listen," she answered.

"I was only going to tell you that I know where a steady man-of-all-work is to be found," he said. "His name is James, and he used to look after the horse and garden of a friend of mine who lived over in Jersey. Shall I secure him for you?"

She smiled. "You are very kind, Mr. Floyd; you think of everything. Buy James for us to-morrow, please."

"And another matter," he said. "Is the Newbroek house to be yours or Mrs. Milinowski's?"

"Mine," she answered.

That same evening Floyd wrote to Mr. Dearborne that Miss Lester had decided to buy the cottage; and after a second trip to Newbroek, after a consultation of lawyers and a signing of papers, the property passed into the possession of Caroline Lester, spinster. She became energetic at once. She despatched an upholsterer to Newbroek, who came back with a plan of the house and a note-book full of measurements. She and Mrs. Milinowski went about shopping, as only women can shop who have been debarred the pleasure a long time, and who have no haunting fear of an empty purse. They had brought with them some furniture from Berlin, but there was a great deal to be bought, and they

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were happy in the buying. Floyd spent most of evenings with his clients, and gave them unprofessional aid in choosing carriages and harness. He had secured not only the steady James, but a cook and a horse from the wreck of his Jersey friend's establishment; and he declared that he meant to go into the house-furnishing business.

"I should undertake to supply even the domestic cat," he said, "and deliver it purring on the hearth-rug."

"Mr. Dearborne is to supply the cat," said Mrs. Milinowski.

On the eve of the exodus to Newbroek, he racked his brains to remember trifles that might have been forgotten, and he suggested all manner of absurd things, such as shaving-mirrors, boot-jacks, and ash-cups.

"But there are shops in Newbroek," he said, "and if you want to leap into popular favor, you must buy as much as you can in the town."

"Popular favor?" Carol repeated. "I don't expect to know a soul. We shall be so unobtrusive that they will forget to put our names in the directory."

"You don't know much about country towns," he said, significantly. "Mark my words, you will create a tremendous sensation. By-the-way, you will go to church, I suppose? Or has Germany made you a materialist?"

"Germany means the Milinowskis to me," she answered. "They are all Catholics, and Aunt Mil became a Romanist, too, but I would not. I shall go to the Episcopal church in Newbroek."

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"Then the congregation will promptly turn out to welcome you," he said, "and you will be lured into charity guilds and sewing societies. I wonder if Mr. Dearborne is as religious as he is learned? I told you that he was a scientific man, didn't I? that he had written a book? Well, I suppose he is an agnostic, too: it is fashionable nowadays to be serious and sceptical. Probably he will bring his book, and lay it at your feet, with 'compliments of the author' on the fly-leaf."

"I have read his book," Carol said. "I was curious, and so I bought it. And it isn't very learned. It is quite exciting, especially the description of the lion-hunt. He had some dangerous adventures."

"Aye, and made the most of them," Floyd remarked.

"He is modest about them," she continued. "You have not read the book, and it isn't fair in you to condemn it."

"You will turn that poor author's head," he said, with a despairing smile. "Just learn a fine passage—I am sure the book abounds in fine passages—and quote it some time in a demure, innocent way. Make believe you didn't know he wrote the book, and say that you have been reading such a thrilling account of travels in Africa, so well written, so graphic, such magnificent descriptions! Miss Lester, his chivalric devotion will excel Sir Walter Raleigh's. He will not only cast his mantle for you to tread upon, but he will prostrate himself in the dust before you."

She listened to him without a smile; then she said, "You seem to take it for granted that I should be

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as ready to wheedle Mr. Dearborne as he would be eager to be wheedled and flattered and fooled. I shall tell him, perhaps, if I ever know him well enough, that his book gave me much pleasure, and that I am glad to know the writer of it. I think it a book to be proud of. Mr. Dearborne is far above most young men, who only know about dogs and horses and tailors."

Floyd rose. "I feel greatly humiliated," he said. "I would I, too, were a savant, but I am only a house-furnisher."

"Oh, you are a guide, philosopher, and friend," she returned.

"Am I, indeed? Alas, my day is over. To-morrow you will cast me off like an old glove."

"Indeed we shall not," said Mrs. Milinowski. "I hope you will come and see us some time in Newbroek."

"Come next Saturday, and spend Sunday," Carol added.

He looked from one to the other.

"Oh, there is the insurance to be attended to," he exclaimed. "Yes, you may expect me Saturday. Now I must bid you good-bye."

He bade them good-bye again the next day, for he was at the station to start them safely on their journey. The cook and coachman had already gone to Newbroek, and when Mrs. Milinowski and Carol entered the cottage, they received an Irish welcome. In the hall hung a large portrait of Colonel Milinowski, and beneath it stood a table that had been in the Berlin house, and whereon, in by-gone days, the

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master had laid his hat and sword. Carol stole away to her own room. The windows were flung open, and the soft spring wind blew in, bringing with it the chirp of robins and a sweet whiff from the hyacinths. The trees had leafed out, but the view southward was still unobscured. She could see the river glinting in the sunlight, and beyond it the rolling hills that had not yet quite lost their wintry blue. Up the road came a little pony-cart, full to overflowing of chattering children, and they all shrieked with delight when one of them started the shaggy pony into a clumsy gallop. How quiet it was after the sound of the rattling cart and the laughter of the children had died away! She looked around her room again, and with infinite content. It was *gemüthlich*, she said to herself. She felt as though she had lived here always.

Annette tapped at the door. "There is a gentleman to see you," she said, and Carol went hastily down to the drawing-room, where Chauncey Dearborne stood, a wicker-basket in his hand.

"Miss Lester," he said, "I have brought you the kitten to clinch the bargain." He put the basket on the table as he spoke. "It was in the bond, you know," he added. "If I can be of any service to you in any way, I shall be most happy. Good-morning."

He bowed, and beat a retreat before Carol could say a word. She was astonished, but after all, a learned pundit was not supposed to be glib and smooth-spoken; he was not a courtly gallant, who spent his time in tripping galliards and making pretty speeches to simpering damsels.

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Leila heard the kitten's piteous cry, and burst like a whirlwind into the drawing-room. The ungrateful little beast ran home before night, but Mr. Dearborne promptly brought it back. Indeed, for several days it seemed as though his chief duty was to capture that wandering kitten and return it to its mistress.

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Chapter IV.

To a little country town, the advent of a prosperous family is a blessing. The last scandal is hushed, rumors about engagements cease, well-worn gossip is laid up for a rainy day, and all eyes are turned upon the new-comers. There is usually a premonitory stir, a whisper that such a house is to be sold at last, and that such people are to occupy it, but Mrs. Milinowski and Carol burst on the town one fine spring day without a moment's warning. The Miss Dows, who lived in the yellow house opposite, had hardly had time to wonder if Blue Cottage, as it was called, was sold, when lo! two strange women appeared there, bag and baggage, horse, carriage, and servants. Miss Carrie Dow and Miss Melinda took turns at their front windows and reported affairs. They were elderly spinsters, who were not a little proud of dwelling on Quaker Hill, and felt that it was their duty to keep an eye out on the neighborhood. The Miss Dows were not rich, but they were intensely aristocratic, and referred to the time when their ancestors had a cow-pasture on the very site where the Dutch Church and parsonage now stand. Miss Carrie Dow had retired to genteel invalidism, solaced by patent medicines. She had a new disease every time she read an advertisement of a nostrum, and it speaks well for these concoctions to add that, after twenty

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years of dosing, Miss Carrie was still quite lively. Her elder sister, Melinda, represented the masculine element in the house: she bullied the maid-of-all-work, she beat down the street-sweeper, she went to market, she paid the taxes, and her trim little figure might be seen any day pattering up Verplanck Avenue, hands primly crossed in front, with a tiny black satchel suspended from them.

Concerning their neat yellow house, with its narrow, blistered front door, its brass knocker, its small windows, its great, bulging chimney there were two opinions. The radicals declared it was a disgrace to the avenue; the conservatives voted it picturesque, and gushed over the old-fashioned furniture within. There was a garden enclosing it, and serpentine, box-bordered paths wound round and round circular flower-beds. The place was in marked contrast to the one just beyond it, owned by a prosperous manufacturer of baking powder, named Thomas Fanshawe. His grounds were laid out by a landscape-gardener, and his large house was a cross between an Italian villa and an Elizabethan mansion. The Miss Dows' territory took a square mouthful out of his domain, but he could no more buy that mouthful than Ahab could buy Naboth's vineyard. He openly declared that he was waiting for the Dow girls to die—the Dow girls they had been called for full forty years.

After passing Mr. Fanshawe's place, Verplanck Avenue lost its suburban character, and grew into a downright country road. On the other hand, as it went northward, it took on citified airs, until the houses along the way clung together in rows, and

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lawns dwindled into dreary backyards. By that time the avenue had left Quaker Hill half a mile behind, and plunged into the very heart of the town. What Mayfair is to London was Quaker Hill to Newbroek. The local paper called it the court end, and living there conferred a sort of patent of nobility.

Among the many rich families who made their home on the hill, none was richer than the Dearborne; and among the fine places, none was finer than the Dearborne. The maker of the fortune, John Dearborne, had been a struggling, hard-working manufacturer until he was forty, when destiny smiled on him. His cautious ventures turned out well; he went into mines and railroads, and let his factory slip into other hands; he bought the place on Quaker Hill; he reared a family in luxury, and at last, as he was preparing to enjoy the goods the gods had given, he died. His wife, who, despite her Van Kuffler name, had been poor, never quite believed in his luck; she could not spend money with the easy recklessness of her children. Out of her liberal allowance she had hoarded a little every year, and when her husband's sudden death came, she thought only of the five thousand dollars that she had put in the savings-bank. She had always feared a crash, and now it had come, and she was a poor, helpless, old woman. Her misfortune dazed her. For weeks she went about in a stupor, hearing the lawyer talk of wills, of stocks and bonds and insurance, submitting to his advice with the same passive obedience that she yielded to her daughter in the matter of crape. At last she fell ill, and on her recovery she awoke to

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the fact that her paltry five thousand dollars was a mere drop in the bucket of money. Her husband had made a will when he was a poor man, bequeathing all his worldly goods to his wife, and by that will she became a very rich woman. Another will was found, dividing the property between his wife and children, and although it was unsigned, and therefore not worth the paper it was written on, Mrs. Dearborne for a while insisted that she would carry out her husband's last wishes. Her elder son, Lawrence, urged her to do so; the other two children urged her not to do so, for they said frankly that Lawrence would spend his portion as speedily and foolishly as possible. The family lawyer pointed out the advantages of keeping the fortune together, at any rate for a few years, and Mrs. Dearborne finally saw the wisdom of abiding by the will made so long ago. Lawrence threatened to contest it; he did everything that lay in his power to influence his mother, but she was firm, and he was appeased by a larger allowance than he had hitherto enjoyed. It was nearly a year after Mr. Dearborne's death before the matter was settled, and then Mrs. Dearborne began to take pride in her possessions. She viewed her houses with complacency; she tried to understand her investments, although she looked to her younger son for explanations of them. Him she could trust. Lawrence went off to travel and amuse himself; Mildred, the only daughter, was married and had her own home and interests; but Chauncey stayed with his mother, and took many cares off her shoulders. He sat in his father's place at table; he attended to the busi-

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ness affairs. These were in good shape, for John Dearborne had arranged them with a view to passing his last days as a man of leisure. And at the homestead in Newbroek everything ran as before. The gardener continued to let an underling water the plants, and the coachman smoked a pipe in the stable door-way while a groom curried the horses.

One fine day in early May, Mrs. Dearborne, after breakfast, walked out on her lawn. Although her husband had been dead nearly two years, she still wore deepest mourning, unrelieved by even a glimpse of white at the throat, and her black dress seemed to murmur a solemn *memento mori* to the upspringing grass and flowers. She was a tall, spare woman, with strongly marked features and dull, deep-set eyes. In spite of her sixty years she carried herself quite erect, and there was only a grayish shimmer in her black hair. She walked slowly over the lawn towards her son, who stood near a flower-bed, his hands in his jacket pockets. He was watching a brown, shiny insect, and his dog, a large, tan-colored mastiff, cocked his head and studied the insect, too, but with an evident desire to lay his paw upon it gently.

"Chauncey," said Mrs. Dearborne—she spoke in a deep contralto that sometimes sank into a guttural bass—"Chauncey, our new neighbors have arrived, I see. Whom does the child belong to? I understood you to say that the lady who bought the house was unmarried."

"So she is," he answered. "The child is her niece. Then there is an elderly lady, a widow. Her name, as I told you, is Milinowski. You will call on them, will you not?"

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"I am not making calls," said Mrs. Dearborne. "Still, I suppose I could go there. It is inconvenient to be totally unacquainted with the neighbors, especially if they happen to keep chickens or rabbits."

"Oh, they will not keep chickens or rabbits to overrun our place," he said, with a little laugh. "I think they are uncommonly pleasant people, a bit unconventional, and not hard to get acquainted with."

"Free and easy," added his mother.

"I do not mean that," he exclaimed. "I mean thoroughly well-bred. I think it is only underbred women who are stiff and formal, always afraid lest they say or do the incorrect thing."

Chauncey spoke in his mother's deliberate way; he did not clip off his words or his sentences, and he rarely lifted his voice. He gesticulated in an odd fashion with his left hand, and now, when he finished his little speech about underbred women, he brushed them all gracefully into obscurity.

"Will you go with me to call at Blue Cottage?" Mrs. Dearborne said, perfectly confident of the reply. Chauncey held himself aloof from society, and never made a call if he could help it. All Newbroek invited him to card-parties, to dinners, to dances, to high-teas, and all Newbroek received his polite note of regret in return. He was popularly supposed to be immersed in abstruse studies, but some of the young men, who had known him from childhood, declared it was mere shyness that made him so great a recluse.

In answer to his mother's question, he smiled dubiously, and said,

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"If I should go about paying calls with you, the Dow girls would circulate a report that I had lost my reason. You go to Blue Cottage, and perhaps I shall screw up my courage sufficiently some day to do more than look into the front door."

The idea tickled him; he called the mastiff, and added,

"Kilo, you will go with me to protect me, eh?"

Kilo raised his bloodshot eyes, and showed his teeth in a grin. He then offered his paw, which Chauncey took gravely, saying,

"All right; we shall go."

"Is the young lady pretty?" Mrs. Dearborne asked.

"Tastes differ," Chauncey answered. "It is hardly fair to judge her just at present, for she is not in good health, Mrs. Milinowski told me."

"What ails her?"

"Good heavens, mother, how should I know?"

"Oh, she might have mentioned having had pneumonia or bilious fever; but of course it is more likely to be one of the mysterious diseases girls suffer from nowadays, part whims and part tight lacing."

Mrs. Dearborne spoke with the profound scorn of a woman who had borne her children easily, and was perfectly free from nerves.

"Why did they come up here to live in Newbroek?" she continued. "Surely not with a view to economy. They seem to have money enough. The idea of people buying a place out of a newspaper! Two lone women like that ought to go and live among their friends."

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"Perhaps they have no friends," said Chauncey, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Then they must be extremely queer women," Mrs. Dearborne exclaimed.

"No, they are not queer, mother; I think you would like them. I do, and you and I mostly agree about things in general, and people in particular."

She smiled. "Yes, we agree, Chauncey," she said, and her eyes rested on him fondly. He drew her hand through his arm, and together they strolled about, talking lightly and enjoying the sunshine. At last Chauncey began to laugh without apparent cause.

"Just think," he said, "what a godsend these newcomers are to the Dow girls—how they will gloat over them and pry into their affairs! I tell you what, mother, if we grow curious about Mrs. Milinowski and her niece, we need only hint at the fact to the Dow girls, and our curiosity will be gratified at once, for within a week the amiable spinsters will know whence the strangers came, how old they are, what their income is, and all the rest."

"Unless," said Mrs. Dearborne, "the strangers choose to hold their tongues."

"And that," Chauncey added, "Newbroek could never forgive."

"You are always laughing at Newbroek," said his mother, "and yet you stay here."

"Oh, I like the cross-grained town, and, besides, I have to stay here and take care of you. It is so sweet to think one's self indispensable," and he laughed again.

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They had reached the greenhouse, and Chauncey paused at the door.

"Won't you come in with me?" his mother said.

"Not unless you want me for some special reason. I have not looked at the morning papers, and I want to see how that shaky bank is coming out. We could lose a little, you know."

"You had better run down to New York, and see about that," she said. "There are several other things I want you to attend to for me, if you have the time."

"The time? What comes before looking after your affairs?"

"*Our* affairs," she said.

"Ours, of course, only when you say that, it puts the matter on the basis of self-interest entirely; whereas, when I say *your*, it gives an altruistic charm to the proceeding."

She looked at him blankly; she always admired him, but she did not always understand him. With a quizzical smile he held open the greenhouse door for her, and then sauntered away, leaving her to walk down the narrow, rose-bordered alley. A young fellow was cutting tea-roses, and she put one in the bosom of her dress, stiffly, however, so that it bobbed up and down with her steps. She was an excellent woman, but she had not the grace that makes many a less severely virtuous creature charming. She did not love flowers; she looked upon them simply as necessary adjuncts to her wealth, for a rich woman must have Jacqueminots all winter, just as she must have laces, and jewels, and a fine equipage.

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"What is this, Thomas?" said she, pausing before a large box full of mould.

"It belongs to Mr. Chauncey, ma'am. I guess he's got some queer worms in there. He told me not to touch the box, ma'am."

This was a delicate warning, and Mrs. Dearborne respected it.

"Probably a scientific experiment," she said, loftily. No horticultural oaf should suspect in what light esteem she held her son's scientific experiments.

She retraced her steps towards the house, and was critically examining a ragged spot in the road, when a childish shout made her look in the direction of Blue Cottage. There was Leila, scampering over the lawn, and declining in voluble German to be a good girl and come to Annette. A lively discussion ensued between these two, not a word of which Mrs. Dearborne could understand, and she walked on towards the house rapidly.

"Why, Chauncey," she said, entering the billiard-room, where her son sat smoking and reading the newspaper, "those people next door are foreigners. I heard them talking German."

"If speaking German makes them foreign, why am I not foreign?" he said. "I, too, speak German."

"Yes, but this was a child and a servant," Mrs. Dearborne persisted.

"Ask the Dow girls about it," was Chauncey's advice. "I can only tell you that they have been living in Germany for the past few years. Mrs. Milinowski is the widow of a Prussian officer. Mr. Floyd told me that, and also that Miss Lester's

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brother and sister-in-law were lost at sea about a year ago. They were the parents of the child. Beyond that, mother, I can give you no information. They have bought the house and paid for it."

"Mr. Floyd seems very ready to be of service to them," Mrs. Dearborne remarked. "Probably he is engaged to Miss Lester."

"Oh, he is a middle-aged man with gray hair," said Chauncey. "And he is an old friend of the family."

He rose impatiently and went up to his study, a large room on the second floor, with windows that commanded a sweeping view of the grounds about the cottage. There were shelves running along one side of the study, and they held a fine collection of scientific books; but a novel lying open near an arm-chair showed that Chauncey did not disdain works of fiction. The appointments of the study betrayed rather luxurious tastes. There were deep-hued rugs, there were Oriental hangings, there was a low couch, and several fine pictures hung on the walls.

To-day Chauncey picked up the novel, and sat down by the south window. Presently he saw Mrs. Milinowski come out of the cottage, stop on the porch to button her glove, and then walk towards the gate.

"Chauncey," called out Mrs. Dearborne from the next room—"Chauncey, who is that lady?"

"Mrs. Milinowski," he answered.

"You say she is an American?" Mrs. Dearborne added.

"I say that she says so," he returned.

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"I don't believe it," cried his mother. "She is a foreigner. What American woman ever wore a bonnet like that?"

Meanwhile, Mrs. Milinowski walked down Verplanck Avenue, unconscious of the curious eyes that watched her from barred window-shutters. She was bent on an exploring tour. She discovered Main Street; she divined the leading grocery and butcher-shop with the instinct of an old house-keeper, and she gave her orders right and left. She went a second time to Benthuysen's grocery to tell him that she wished him to call at her house every morning for orders. Mr. Benthuysen was a very superior grocer, who wore flamboyant neckties, and whose wife was the president of a reading-club. He took the card Mrs. Milinowski left, and carried it next door to Frank Huyler, a dry-goods merchant.

"There, Huyler," he said, "what do you make out of that name? It's a jaw-breaker."

Mr. Mott, cashier of the Duke County Bank, happened to be in the store, and he looked at the card, too.

"Oh, the people who have bought the Blue Cottage," he said, airily.

"Yes, but pronounce it," said Mr. Benthuysen. "Smells like dynamite, don't it?"

"Milinowski; it's easy enough," said Mr. Mott. "Mrs. Mott is going to call there by-and-by. We are all on the hill together, you know. I guess they're very nice people."

With this he sauntered out, nodded to an acquaintance, crossed the street, and disappeared in the bank.

"Mrs. Mott is going to call there," Mr. Benthuysen

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repeated, with an ugly sneer. "And then Mr. Mott will call, and suggest that the ladies open an account at the Duke County Bank."

By the next day all Newbroek was humming to the tune of Milinowski. The name of Lester was swallowed up in the more extraordinary one, which was universally voted outlandish. Nearly everybody had his little joke to make about dynamite and the Nihilists, for the ski had a decidedly revolutionary sound. The wits declared that to pronounce the name properly, it was absolutely necessary to sneeze. Meanwhile, the dwellers on Quaker Hill discussed the new-comers in solemn conclave, and like Mrs. Dearborne, resolved to let a decorous interval elapse before they paid a welcoming call. The Dow girls continued to watch at the front windows, and on Saturday Miss Carrie was thrown into a state of great excitement by the appearance of Oliver Floyd at the cottage.

"He was here the other day; I saw him with Chauncey Dearborne," said Miss Melinda. "Do you suppose he is their husband?" she added, not meaning thereby to impute polygamy to Floyd.

"I guess not," said Miss Carrie. "He is too old for the young one, and he is too young for the old one. I shouldn't wonder if he was their brother. He has got a nose kind of like Miss Lester. Sister, I think it would be only neighborly for us to call there next week. It is hardly Christian the way Newbroek folks avoid strangers, and I think we might as well run across the street and see if we can't be of some friendly service."

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Miss Melinda nodded. "I wonder if Mrs. Dearborne will call on them?" she said. "I suppose Chauncey will be real sociable with his new neighbors, just as he is with his old ones. He is *so* fond of company."

Then the sisters both smiled at this exquisite sarcasm.

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Chapter V.

The insurance business that had ostensibly brought Floyd to Newbroek demanded an half-hour of his time, and after that he was free to come and go as he pleased. He walked all about the town with Carol, he romped with Leila, and that evening he played extremely weak chess with Mrs. Milinowski.

"I feel like a sedate, domestic character," he said to Carol when he bade her good-night.

"And are you not one?" she asked.

"Hardly," he answered, with a queer smile at her; then he went to his room and smoked cigar after cigar, the queer smile lingering on his lips.

The rain came down that night with a rush and a roar, but Sunday morning dawned a clear, bright, glistening day. Floyd asked for the newspaper, and found that not a newspaper came to the house, although Mrs. Milinowski explained that she had always been in the habit of taking in the *Berliner Tageblatt.* While the church-bells were ringing, he strolled slowly towards the town, meeting the pious, the conventional, the hypocritical folks, all of them conscious of their spring finery. In Main Street he ran across Chauncey Dearborne, who wore blue flannels, and looked as though there were no Sundays for him.

"I am trying to find a New York paper," said

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Floyd, "and as I can't find one, I want one more than I ever did in my life."

Chauncey laughed, and turned into a tiny cigar-shop that to all outward appearance was closed, never to be re-opened. Behind the counter sat a dapper little French Jew, who bade Mr. Dearborne good-morning, and gave Floyd his choice of New York journals. Both men bought cigars on the Jew's invitation, and chiefly to confer a favor, for neither accepted the proffered match.

"We are late for church," Floyd said as they passed out to the street. "I fear that my innocent remark about papers has turned you from a possibly pious design."

"Oh no," Chauncey said. "I do sometimes go to church to please my mother, but this morning I am going rowing."

"To please yourself," Floyd added.

"Yes, to please myself. It is the very morning for a pull up the river."

"And do you go alone?"

Chauncey nodded. "Alone in a shell-boat. I like to spin. There is a boat-club here, and I believe I am a member. I pay as much as ten dollars a year for the privilege of staying away from the meetings."

"I am afraid you would not lay claim to a place beside Abou Ben Adhem," Floyd remarked. "You seem to shun your fellow-men."

"You see," said Chauncey, "most of my friends here are in business of some sort or other, so they have not the time to loaf with an idler like me. They

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are dosing patients, or watching stocks, or cheating clients—" He stopped short, his face very red. "I forgot you were a lawyer," he added, with a boyish, irrepressible chuckle.

"I forgive you," said Floyd. "Don't you ever wish you were dosing patients or cheating clients, too? I have heard men of leisure regret they were not men of affairs."

"That is all humbug," Chauncey rejoined, bluntly. "Nobody would peg away if he had money enough to be idle—that is, not peg away at money-getting. A man might go in for science or art or literature merely for the love of it. Do you suppose anybody would practise law merely for the love of it?"

"Not for the love of law, but for the love of power," Floyd answered. "However, as I am not going rowing, I don't think I will walk down this hill merely for the love of exercise."

Below lay the river, its wide expanse unbroken by even a skiff. He turned, and saw a big yellow dog standing some distance up the street, undecided apparently whether to advance or retreat.

"Isn't that your mastiff?" he said. Chauncey wheeled about sharply.

"Kilo, come here," he cried, and the great brute sneaked up to him.

"I will take him home," said Floyd.

"He wouldn't go; he would simply follow me and swim after my shell-boat, or stand on the bank and howl," Chauncey answered. "Come, Kilo, you have knocked my row in the head this morning."

So saying he fell in step with Floyd again, and the

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two men walked briskly together as far as the Dearborne gate-way, where they met Carol and Leila who had been out for an airing. Leila had no fear of any animal, biped or quadruped, and she marched up to Kilo, and laid hold of his collar. He meekly submitted to be led by her when he saw that his master submitted to be led forward also, and this procession proceeded slowly towards the cottage. Leila headed it, and she commanded Kilo to enter the gate. He remonstrated by sitting down with an air of resolution. She tugged at his collar, she coaxed, she commanded, but Kilo would not budge until his master ordered him to go on.

"He is perfectly good-natured," said Chauncey. "I warn you, Miss Lester, that if you give him anything to eat he will pay you a daily call. He will annoy you by his devotion."

"That would not annoy me," she returned.

Chauncey lifted his eyebrows. "Ah, but if the dog came, so would his master."

They entered the house, and Carol sent Annette for a plate of biscuit. "Here, Leila," she said, "make friends with your neighbors." Whereupon child and dog sat down on the floor in the library, and ate Albert biscuit together in perfect concord. Floyd smiled under his gray mustache as he seated himself on a sofa beside Mrs. Milinowski, who was knitting in serene forgetfulness of the fact that in America knitting-needles are tabooed on Sunday. He glanced towards young Dearborne, and noticed a dark shade on his cheeks, chin, and upper lip. Clearly the man of science did not choose to hide his well-cut mouth and

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square, cleft chin beneath mustache and beard. Like the strong man in the Earthly Paradise, he was

"Gray-eyed, with crisp curled hair 'twixt black and brown,"

but his hair was cut so close that it could curl only at the temples. Leaning forward, with his hands on his knees, he gazed straight in Carol's eyes while he answered her questions.

"Yes, I was three years in Germany," he said, "but I never stopped long in Berlin."

"You were in Heidelberg?" said Mrs. Milinowski. "You studied there?"

"I studied a little, and enjoyed myself a good deal."

"And fought duels," Carol added, and at this he shrugged his shoulders.

"I did everything that was most foolish," he answered, with a glance at Colonel Milinowski's swords crossed over the mantel-piece.

"I understand you are a great traveller," Floyd said, suavely. "I hear that you have killed bears in Greenland, stuck pigs in India, and shot lions in Africa."

"That sounds like a true Newbroek story," Chauncey exclaimed. "My fellow-townsmen have a hazy notion that I trotted around the globe like one of the heroes of Jules Verne's romances, whereas in truth I only went into Africa a little way with two friends of mine, and did not stay there very long either. My other travels were like everybody's in the well-worn ruts through the Continent."

"I am afraid you underrate your exploits," Floyd

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said, still with great suavity. "You choose to ignore your fame as an African explorer. Our common friend, Theodore Perry, told me about you."

Chauncey lifted his hands. "Oh, Theodore Perry," he said, in tones of contempt. "Much he knows about me. Because we went to school together he fancies he is my dearest friend. He is everybody's friend; he understands everybody's affairs."

"Ah," Floyd said, "hear this ungrateful man talk. I assure you, Theodore has the highest opinion of you; he considers you a second Sir John Lubbock."

"I don't believe he ever heard of Sir John Lubbock," Chauncey retorted. He was ruffled a little.

"You underrate him," said Floyd. "He has good literary taste. He told me to read your book on Africa. He found it deeply interesting, and so, I venture to add, did Miss Lester."

At this Chauncey not only colored, but scowled. "If Teddy Perry reads many such books they will turn his brain," he muttered, rising abruptly. He made a stiff bow, and then almost ran away, Kilo galloping after him, deaf to Leila's calls.

"He thought you were making sport of him," Carol said, reproachfully.

"He is a man of great perspicacity," Floyd returned; "but I had no idea he was so thin-skinned. For a savant, his conversation does not quite bristle with erudition. I stand in greater awe of his brawn than his brain."

"He is shy," said Carol. "Shy men always bolt away like that. One used to come to see us in Berlin, Lieutenant von den Steinen. I would be talking

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with him about the weather or the theatre, and when a pause came he would put his heels together, bow, and vanish, his face perfectly scarlet."

"I suspect you saw a good many lieutenants in Berlin," said Floyd, slyly.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Hundreds of them," she replied, "and all alike."

"My husband wanted her to marry one or two of them," explained Mrs. Milinowski.

Floyd laughed, and Carol looked a little annoyed for a minute; then she laughed too.

"Only one of them at a time," she said, in tones of remonstrance.

"No," rejoined her aunt, who took everything literally. "You forget when young Baron von Gebhardt and Arthur von Rothsattel—"

"Don't, don't!" cried Carol. "Mr. Floyd will think you are trying to persuade him that I am a dangerous coquette. Come, let us go to luncheon;" and she led the way towards the pretty octagon dining-room.

"You don't know how refreshing it is for a bachelor," Floyd began, as he took his seat at the table, and dropped his napkin over his knee—"for a bachelor," he repeated, and then stopped short, the hot, painful blush of manhood rising over his face—"for a bachelor, or a widower, or some such wretched creature," he went on, "to occasionally sit down at a table like this—thank you, Mrs. Milinowski, I will take the Rhine wine."

He drank the wine hastily, and his hot face cooled. "It is so delightful here," he said, "that I wish I

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had insurance business, or some sort of pretext, for coming next Saturday."

"Come without a pretext," said the young mistress, graciously.

He shook his head. "I am like Mr. Dearborne's big dog. If you feed me on biscuits I shall be forever coming."

"We will try to give you something better than biscuits," said Mrs. Milinowski.

"Metaphorical biscuits, I meant. And then what would Mrs. Grundy say?"

"Mrs. Grundy?" Carol repeated with fine scorn. "Mrs. Grundy has no terrors for us. She will not condescend to pay us the slightest attention. There is such a comfort in being completely out of the world as we are here. I mean to do as I like. That is the prerogative of a free-born American woman."

"You are getting well very fast," said Mrs. Milinowski, dryly.

It was too fine a day to stay in-doors. Floyd took Carol off for a walk that afternoon, chosing a narrow, winding road that led neither he nor she knew whither. They went on until they came to a spring gushing out of a rock, where they made the astonishing discovery that spring-water in a clean clam-shell is a drink good enough for gods. Then they turned their faces homeward, and met Chauncey Dearborne just starting for a drive, his dog seated beside him in the high, red-wheeled wagon.

"I wonder why he stays here in this little town," Floyd said, reflectively.

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"Because he likes it, I suppose," Carol answered. "You don't believe in his studies, do you?"

"I cannot think they are very serious. I fancy he is not the stuff that ardent scientific men are made of. He rows and rides, drives his trotters, educates his mastiff, and in odd minutes reads Dárwin. He is a fine specimen of a country gentleman, but I doubt if he ever accomplishes much in the world. He is too rich, too handsome, too self-satisfied—and perhaps too lazy. You don't agree with me, I am sure."

"I don't agree with you, and yet I don't know why," Carol said. "I think that some day he will astonish us."

"You think him so because you think him so," Floyd rejoined. "We shall see. I dare say you and he will become very good friends, in the American fashion."

"Oh no," she exclaimed; "what could he find in me that he should become my friend? He probably likes clever women—women who have read a good deal. I don't know anything; I left school at seventeen, and beyond learning a little German, and French, and Italian, my education stopped. This summer I mean to study. Won't you buy me some books that will improve my mind?"

She smiled ruefully; she was quite in earnest. Some women bow down before wealth, others before fashion or position, and a few before learning. Carol was among the few.

"You can send them to me, or bring them when

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you come again," she added. "You see, I take it for granted you are coming again, and soon."

"I should like to," said Floyd. "I should like to run up every now and then, and feel quite sure that I should be welcome; but—" he broke off suddenly. They were at the cottage gate, and with his hand on the latch, he turned and faced her, "but I fear that I should be a trouble," he added.

"You a trouble?" she repeated. "You? You who dragged us out of the slough of despond? Is there no such thing as gratitude in the world—no such thing as friendship?"

He held out his hand. "Forgive me for doubting you," he said.

He was moody and silent that evening, and went early to his room, leaving Mrs. Milinowski and Carol in the library. They talked him over, woman-fashion.

"I think he has had some trouble lately," Carol said.

"Maybe he is in love," quoth Mrs. Milinowski.

"Oh no," said Carol. "Jack told me once, long, long ago, that he had had a love affair, and it ended in some miserable way, and he—I mean Mr. Floyd, you know—became a sort of woman-hater."

"They *always* fall in love," said Mrs. Milinowski; but neither she nor Carol knew that Floyd's love affair had ended in marriage.

He was moody and silent again the next morning, and returned to New York by the first train, pleading a business engagement. He remembered Carol's request about books, but she would not have made

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the request had she known that it would take him several hours to write a list of what he fancied she needed, and several hours more to choose editions; and he lost no time, for he left Newbroek on Monday, and on Wednesday the box of books was at the cottage.

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Chapter VI.

True to their wish to be neighborly, the Dow girls crossed the road on Thursday afternoon, and tripped up to the cottage door. They wore black silk gowns, India shawls with large white veins meandering through a mass of red, and they carried mother-of-pearl card-cases. In the matter of bonnets they differed, for Miss Carrie's was tastefully trimmed with a vine and two or three pink roses, and the strings were tied under her left ear, while Miss Melinda's head-gear was severely simple, and her strings made a tight bow under her chin. She had a somewhat remarkable chin. It looked like an unripe strawberry, and when she talked she thrust it out in an aggressive way.

Annette showed them into the drawing-room, where they sat bolt upright on a sofa, silently studying the furniture until Mrs. Milinowski and Carol entered. Miss Melinda Dow took the initiative.

"We thought we would not stand on ceremony," she said, "seeing that we are neighbors."

"We live in the cream-colored house opposite," added Miss Carrie.

"Newbroek isn't a very sociable town," Miss Melinda continued. "It is extremely conservative, too conservative, I think. We have lived here always,

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and of course have a large circle of friends, but sister and I don't go much into society nowadays."

"My niece and I do not care for society," said Mrs. Milinowski, frigidly.

"Is Miss Lester your niece? We thought she was your sister. There is quite a marked resemblance between her and your little girl."

"Not my little girl, my grand-niece," said Mrs. Milinowski.

"Oh, your grand-niece. The daughter, I suppose, of Miss Lester's brother. We saw him here the other day. He looks so much like a friend of ours out in Wabash. Carrie, I am telling Mrs. Milinowski about the resemblance between Mr. Lester and cousin Frank Hulme."

"Yes?" said Miss Carrie, interrogatively. "I assure you," she continued, turning to Carol, "when I saw your brother I thought it was our cousin Frank."

"That gentleman is no relation to me," Carol said. "He is an old friend, that is all."

"Oh, an old friend. Now sister and I thought we could trace a resemblance between you and him."

Miss Carrie smoothed her gloves nervously; she was a little afraid of Carol; Miss Melinda, however, was afraid of nobody.

"I trust you will like Newbroek," she was saying. "There is very good society here, but as I said, we are inhospitable. Did you know any one here before you came, Mrs.—Mrs.—really, you must excuse me, but would you pronounce your name for me?"

"Milinowski," said the widow.

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"Russian, is it not?" ventured Miss Carrie, timidly; but this question remained unanswered.

"Oh yes—Milinowski," said Miss Melinda. "Did you know any one here before you came? If you did, it would make it much pleasanter. I dare say, Miss Lester," she continued, "that you will find our little town very dull after the gayety of New York."

Carol was beginning to laugh helplessly. "We have not lived in New York for a long time," she replied. "We have made our home in Berlin, but I do not think the quiet of Newbroek will be unpleasant after the gayety of Berlin."

"I have always longed to visit Europe," said Miss Carrie, plaintively.

The sisters stayed a full half hour, and Leila came in to make their acquaintance. She viewed them with calm, critical eyes.

"You wear a funny breastpin," she said to Miss Melinda, who looked gratified, and took off the trinket to show her.

"That belonged to my grandmother, and it is over a hundred and fifty years old," she said, complacently.

"I should think you would like a new one by this time," was Leila's comment.

"Dear little thing!" cried Miss Carrie, in rapture. "Come and see me."

Leila went to her promptly, and gazed up in the spinster's withered face.

"Have you got any little girls that I could play with?" she said.

"No, but there are plenty of little girls in the neighborhood. There is Mamie Mott and Nelly

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Heaton, and a good many more. They will come and see you one of these days."

Leila drew a long sigh. "I hope so," she said, despondently. "Mr. Dearborne did give me a kitten, but it is *fortgelaufen*."

"What?" exclaimed Miss Melinda and Miss Carrie in a breath.

"*Fortgelaufen*," Leila repeated, with impatience. "Gone, run away. *Weggegangen*."

"Leila occasionally confuses her German and English," Mrs. Milinowski explained. "Mr. Dearborne was kind enough to give her a kitten, and to-day it disappeared."

The Dow girls looked at each other significantly and smiled.

"Mr. Dearborne is a singular young man," said Miss Melinda. "I am surprised to hear that he would take the trouble to give a kitten to a child. He is a most singular young man. He does not identify himself with the town at all; he looks down on the society and never pays calls. I must say I should think more of him if he were not so selfish. It makes me feel bad to see him driving out every day with that big dog of his, instead of taking the young ladies as other young gentlemen do."

"Yes," chimed in Miss Carrie, "and he has two or three boats, but he rows all by himself. Now his brother Lawrence is so different."

"Their father was a carpenter's son," said Miss Melinda; and then she gave a complete history of the rise of the Dearborne family, digressing a little to explain how a Miss Van Kuffler came to marry so far

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beneath her. "But John Dearborne was a fine man," she said, in conclusion, "and I guess he never could take much pride in either of his sons. They are both lazy. I believe Chauncey does make some pretensions to literature, but he would rather ride around with his big dog than do anything else."

"Sister, I think we had better go," suggested Miss Carrie; and then they took their leave, urging Mrs. Milinowski and Carol to run over informally any afternoon or evening, and begging that Leila might be allowed to come and spend the day some time.

"*Lieber Himmel!*" Mrs. Milinowski exclaimed, after they had finally gone. She rarely indulged in any expression so strong as this, but these spinsters struck her as the most extraordinary women she had ever met; English utterly failed to characterize her amazement.

"We know all about the tribe of Dearborne," said Carol, "and the Miss Dows tried to find out all about the tribe of Milinowski. They amused me. I wish I had asked them who the people are who live in that large house over yonder. I saw a lady come out this morning on horseback, and go galloping off. Aunt Mil, I mean to have a saddle-horse, and perhaps the lady opposite will ride with me some time. She will call, probably, although Newbroek is *so* unsociable."

Just then Chauncey appeared, the stray kitten in his arms. He tried to escape at once, but Carol made him stay, and in ten minutes he was telling her all about the Dow girls.

"My brother and I used to play all manner of tricks on them. We dyed their cat green, we put a

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piece of sheet-iron on their chimneys, and many is the tick-tack we tormented them with. A tick-tack, you know, is a little nail fastened to a string, and then hung up outside a window with a long thread attached. We boys would pull the thread at midnight, and the Dow girls would scream 'thieves!' and ring the dinner-bell to frighten them away. They think I am a sad fellow to this day."

He shook his head mournfully, and turned out his palms as though mutely begging for mercy.

"I am growing interested in the neighborhood," Carol said. "Tell me, who are the people who live opposite in the fine house. There is a lady who rides horseback."

"The Fanshawes," he answered. "Mrs. Fanshawe is an excellent horsewoman. People rather run her down because she does as she pleases, but I like her, although I do not know her very well. She and her husband are different from most Newbroekers. He is a good-humored fellow, short and fat, and plays billiards better than any man in town. Mrs. Fanshawe drives his trotters, and rides a Kentucky mare, and rather enjoys shocking the prim people. I have always fancied that they have a good deal of fun over there. By-the-way, she is Mr. Perry's cousin. Do you know Mr. Perry?"

"The one who admires your book?" Carol said, wickedly. "No, I don't know him."

"Ah, do not poke fun at my book!" he exclaimed. "If you only knew how ashamed I am of it. I was very young when I wrote it; I shall never do such a thing again."

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Carol opened her eyes in amazement. "I bought it," she said, "expecting to find a dull, scientific treatise, very learned, very uninteresting."

"I wish you had not been disappointed," he said, naïvely. "It is all stuff. If I could write one of the dull treatises you scorn, I should not be ashamed of it. Anybody can write a book of travels. The schoolgirls all do nowadays."

This contemptuous way of speaking impressed Carol. She looked up at Chauncey timidly; she was a little afraid of this handsome young man of science, with his quick frowns and brusque speeches.

"A book is a great thing to me," she said, laughing at herself. "I am going to read a good deal this summer. Come into the library and see my books. Most of them belonged to my father and brother, but a few are mine. Mr. Floyd sent up these the other day."

Chauncey looked at the ones Floyd had sent.

"He knows about something besides law," he remarked, dryly. "You have not many novels; no George Eliot, no Charles Reade, and positively not a single American romance—if there are any American romances. If you will allow me, I will send you over a little light literature—some novels."

"I supposed you scorned them," she said, frankly.

"Scorned novels!" he cried, in fine indignation. "Do you take me for a Philistine, who only believes in a good fat book full of facts and dates? Miss Lester!"

He uttered her name in a tone of solemn expostulation.

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"But I thought you were a scientific man?" she said.

"I am nothing," he answered. "I am a professional idler."

Mrs. Milinowski came in and bade him stay to dinner. "Unless," she added, "you feel in duty bound to keep your mother company."

"My mother is in New York, visiting my sister Mildred," he answered.

"Then dine with us," said Mrs. Milinowski. She little knew how much she was asking of him, but he accepted her invitation as though he went to dine with his friends every evening in the week. At table he watched Mrs. Milinowski carve, and his respect for her deepened. It seemed hard to believe that he was in Newbroek; that his own house was next door, that the Dow girls were across the street.

"*Wollen Sie Rheinwein?*" murmured Annette, in his ear.

"*Bitte*," he answered, and then began to laugh. "I feel as though I were in Vienna!" he exclaimed.

"And why in Vienna?" Carol asked.

"Because it is the most charming place in the world," he said, and Carol smiled across the table at him.

He did not linger long after dinner, but excused himself on the plea that he must go to the station for his mother. Perhaps he changed his mind; at any rate, he did not go to the station at all, and the coachman drove Mrs. Dearborne home that evening. She had only had time to receive her son's filial kiss when the door-bell rang, and Mr. Vaughn, the family law-

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yer, was shown into the library. He was a wiry little old man, with a shock of white hair, beetling white eyebrows, and a mahogany-colored face. Although he was past seventy, he was as eager to serve his clients as he had been thirty years ago. Lately he had taken his son Will into partnership, but Will told Chauncey that his father would not let him do much except write letters and serve summons. Still, Mr. Vaughn was forced to acknowledge that the years were beginning to weigh upon him. His memory had grown treacherous, and it galled him to be compelled to carry tablets and make memoranda. He was not only the family lawyer to the Dearbornes, but an old friend, for John Dearborne and he had grown up together, worked side by side, and trusted each other implicitly.

It was evident that Mr. Vaughn had come this evening on business. He hurried over the preliminary talk, and finally said to Mrs. Dearborne: "What about the River Farm? Is Thomson to rent it again, or do you propose to carry out John's plan and make the property over to Chauncey?"

"I don't think Chauncey wants the farm," she said, with a glance at her son.

He stepped forward quickly. "I do want the farm; I always wanted it," he said, "but I could not beg you to give it to me, mother. You know that if father had lived a week longer it would have been mine."

He touched his mother in a tender place, for it had become her cult to carry out her husband's plans, to do as he had done. In the house she would not al-

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low a piece of furniture to be changed. He had liked it so, and so it should remain.

"Yes," said Mr. Vaughn, "I know it was John's wish. I remember a long talk we had about it once. My memory is treacherous, and yet I remember almost his very words. It was one Sunday afternoon when we were out walking. He began by saying that he loved a country life, and that it had been his dream to live on a great farm, and walk about it, and see the cows and sheep and colts, and to watch the crops. But he had always had to work hard, and his years were slipping past." Mr. Vaughn's voice trembled. He coughed sternly, and continued: "Then he said, 'But my boy is like me, and he shall lead the life that I longed to and could not. I can give him money enough, so that he need not tremble if he lose his hay and his oats.' Chauncey, you will never know how your father built castles for you to dwell in, as I now build castles for my boy, as I hope you will build for your son some day."

Mr. Vaughn stopped, and looked earnestly at Chauncey. Mrs. Dearborne did not lift her eyes or speak for a long time. At last she said:

"But I want you with me, Chauncey. Why should I live here, and you down in the country? I am growing old. It will be time enough for you to live on the farm when I am gone."

"I could live here and still have the farm," he said, with gentle pertinacity.

"Yes, you could," she rejoined. "Well, we can arrange that easily enough," she added. "I will give it to you on your next birthday if all goes well."

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"Thank you," he said.

Mr. Vaughn laid his hand on his shoulder affectionately. "You will show Duke County what scientific farming is," he said, smiling. "You can experiment to your heart's content, and it is a delightful life. I wish I were twenty-seven."

"Twenty-six," Chauncey interposed. "Larry is twenty-seven."

The old gentleman looked confused, and glanced at Mrs. Dearborne. "Twenty-six, eh? Dear me, I forget everything. Well, any way, you are young enough, young enough. You can enjoy life. Twenty-six? I thought you were my son's age."

"I am a year younger than Will," Chauncey said.

"How is Will?" broke in Mrs. Dearborne. "I heard he had sprained his ankle?"

"Oh, it was a mere turn, nothing serious. He slipped on the tennis field. By-the-way, Chauncey, why don't you come and play tennis? When you get down there on the farm, I suppose you will shut yourself up and live like a hermit."

"I am going to turn over a new leaf," said Chauncey. "I am going to be the merry farmer that somebody wrote about. Ah, you can't think how proud I shall be when I can call myself a farmer."

"You look like a farmer," said his mother, dryly.

"I am only an idler now," he said. He bent and touched his lips to his mother's forehead. "But when I walk over my acres, I shall remember who gave them to me."

"It was your father's wish," she said.

Mr. Vaughn did not like to spend an evening out

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of his arm-chair, and as his errand was done he trotted briskly homeward.

"I wonder what made him think of the farm," said Chauncey.

"Thomson's lease runs out soon, and I suppose he has been to see if he could get it renewed," Mrs. Dearborne answered. "You will keep him as farmer, won't you?" she added.

"Oh yes, for a while any way. I have nothing to say as yet, though—not until the farm is mine. I hope Mr. Vaughn won't die before the papers are drawn. His memory is very shaky. He confuses me with brother Larry always. By-the-way, I have not had time to ask you how you enjoyed yourself in New York. Did you find Mildred and the children well?"

"The baby has had the measles; otherwise they are well. Joe has rented the Felton villa at Newport for the season, and Mildred is anticipating a gay summer. She wants you to come and see her, Chauncey. You neglect her shamefully."

"I cannot stand Joe," Chauncey said, frankly. "How Mildred could marry him is beyond my comprehension. But women are queer; they are kittle cattle."

"You should not speak so of your brother-in-law," Mrs. Dearborne said.

"He ought not to be my brother-in-law; Mildred ought not to have married him. She has changed so that I do not know her any more. We used to be good friends, but now she is as sharp as a razor with me. I lay it all to Joe."

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Mrs. Dearborne did not defend Mr. Pelham very warmly. She did not love him overmuch either, but he was a good husband as husbands go, and she thought that her daughter might have drawn a much worse prize in the matrimonial lottery. She was not ashamed of him, and to a woman as proud as Mrs. Dearborne this was a great comfort.

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Chapter VII.

"I think, Aunt Mil, that I shall go to church this morning," Carol said one Sunday.

"Where?" Mrs. Milinowski asked. She had already found her way to her own church, but she was not a devout Romanist, and made no effort to convert Carol or influence Leila.

"Saint Paul's," Carol answered. "Mr. Dearborne showed it to me the other day."

"I hope the music will be better than it is at Saint Peter's," said Mrs. Milinowski.

Saint Peter's was the one Catholic church in the town, and the congregation was made up of mechanics, laborers, and their families, together with Irish servants. Mrs. Milinowski's appearance there had been duly reported, and therefore the sexton of Saint Paul's was surprised when Carol asked him to show her to a seat, for he supposed that she, too, must be a Romanist. He complied with her request; then returned to the lobby, and chuckled in delight.

"Good-morning, Doctor Silloway," he said to a gentleman who ran up the church steps as the bell ceased tolling. "I have got a good joke to tell you. I have put a papist in our church to-day — in the pew just ahead of yours. She thinks she is safe

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and sound in Saint Peter's, but she will come walking out pretty soon."

"Who?" asked the doctor. He was a fine-looking, rosy-cheeked man of thirty-five, a bachelor, and a member of a good old Newbroek family.

"Miss Milinowski," the sexton answered. "They are Catholics, you know, and she has made a mistake."

"Gillen, you never were inside a Catholic church in your life," said the doctor. "If you had been, you would not be giggling over Miss Lester. Her name is not Milinowski, and she knows what church this is as well as you do."

The doctor was a vestryman, and having thus duly rebuked the chuckling sexton, he entered the church and took his place in his pew. Before him Carol sat, and he had plenty of time to study her appearance. He was a beau in the town, and he flattered himself that he admired women with cool discrimination. He was usually just engaged, just out of an engagement, or on the verge of falling in love. This spring was an interregnum; there was no one enthroned in his heart, no one whom he drove out every fine day, no one to whom he sent roses regularly twice a week. He was sighing for new worlds to conquer.

On the whole, he approved of Miss Lester. She was well-dressed, and her manner was the perfection of calm, careless unconcern. She had no idea that the congregation paid much more attention to her than to Mr. Ziegler, the rector. He delivered a neat little sermon in fifteen minutes, and then dismissed the congregation, while the good people at the Dutch

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and Presbyterian churches were looking for the last hymn.

Coming out, Dr. Silloway fell in with Mrs. Tom Fanshawe, a vivacious little brunette. "Have you called on your new neighbors?" he said.

"No, but I suppose I must," she answered. "Miss Lester, it seems, is coming to our church. I wonder if St. Peter's folks will consider it their duty to call on Mrs. Milinowski? In that case, Bridget, the cook, and Michael, the coachman, will go with me in state to Blue Cottage."

"Won't you include me in your train?" said the doctor.

Mrs. Fanshawe shook her prayer-book at him. "I am sure you don't know where the text was," she said, "for you looked at Miss Lester more than at Mr. Ziegler. And you a vestryman!"

"I confess I should like to know the foreigners," he said, frankly, "but a doctor can't go and pay calls on strangers; he would be accused of drumming up practice. And the Dow girls live opposite, unfortunately. Perhaps the foreigners will wake up the town."

"You could turn a gay Paris boulevard into Newbroek without the least effect, except on the unhappy boulevard," Mrs. Fanshawe retorted. "You expect two lone women to rouse the town? Doctor, much learning hath made thee mad."

The doctor laughed, showing his fine teeth, and then helped her into her carriage. He hastened forward to join his cousin, Penelope Vaughn, and to her he put the same question he had to Mrs. Fanshawe.

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Penelope was an old-fashioned sort of girl. She wore prim, Quakery gowns, she had a formal way of talking, but in spite of her timid manners and cautious words she was of an ardent, impulsive temperament, and surprised her friends now and then by some rash action. She was nearly twenty-seven, and it was generally supposed that she would one day marry her cousin, Frank Silloway.

"I really had not thought of calling on Miss Lester," she said, in answer to his question, "but if mamma wishes to go I will gladly accompany her. She has a sweet face, I think."

The doctor nodded. "Yes, and I hope, Pen, that you and the rest of the girls will treat her half-way decently. We are rather Chinese here in Newbroek. You are in a position to do quite as you please, and it seems to me as though there were a few duties incumbent upon you."

Penelope took this with perfect seriousness. She crossed her hands neatly over her prayer-book, and walked some distance in silence. She was painfully conscientious, and she had just come from church.

"Yes!" she exclaimed at last, "we are Chinese, Frank; we are unchristian; we have our own set and our own pleasures, and we are utterly selfish. I dare say there are a great many pleasant people living in Newbroek whom I never even heard of."

"Thousands," Frank answered with a laugh. "It is for you, my sweet cousin, to set an example and welcome the strangers."

His careless words fell into good ground and bore fruit. Penelope called on Carol Lester Monday af-

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ternoon, and took a fancy to her straightway. She induced her mother to call, she urged it upon her friends, and it was soon very well understood that the Vaughn family graciously extended the hand of welcome to the new-comers. People smiled a little; Penelope's friends, Mrs. Thorpe and Mary Yelverton and Bertha Douglass, laughed, and declared that it was one of Pen's whims; but Penelope's whims carried weight.

That week cards flowed into Blue Cottage, and once or twice the little drawing-room was full of people. Some went out of curiosity, some went because others did, but the result was that nearly all Quaker Hill welcomed the new neighbors. The Dow girls lived in a state of excitement behind the bowed shutters of their front windows, and gazed with wonder at the ladies who lifted the gate-latch of the strangers.

"It isn't often people are received like this," Miss Melinda said, at last. "Everybody in town is calling. Why, there go the Van Vlecks, all three of them. What's that Jennie Van Vleck has in her bonnet? Poppies, ain't they? Well, I guess Mrs. Milinowski and her niece feel pretty well set up. They ought to."

"I don't understand them," said Miss Carrie, mournfully. "I can understand a family where there is a father and mother and children, but when everybody are aunts and nieces, and the brother turns out to be a gentleman friend, then I can't understand 'em, Melinda."

Miss Melinda shook her gray head sagaciously.

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"We shall understand 'em, Carrie. People can't come and camp down on Quaker Hill without getting pretty well known. They've got money enough, but money won't carry 'em everywhere. It might in New York, but it can't in Newbroek, though it is amazing what money will do nowadays."

Miss Melinda and her sister were not the only ones who watched with interest the callers at Blue Cottage. Mrs. Dearborne on the right, and Mrs. Fanshawe on the left, were likewise amazed at the flattering influx of ladies, who, in smart spring gowns, wended their way towards the little house.

"It is sheer curiosity, Tom," Mrs. Fanshawe said to her husband. "Everybody is crazy to see how a woman named Milinowski lives and behaves. I am curious myself; I am going over there, too. Plain people, Browns, Joneses, and Robinsons, might live and die in Newbroek without receiving so many calls in a year as these fantastic folks have in a week. So much is in a name, after all."

Mr. Fanshawe drew down the corners of his lips. "I don't know why you want to run after these people, Harry. Every shopkeeper in town has sent his wife, of course, but I don't ask you to aid me in that way."

"Yes, but the Vaughns have called," cried his wife, "and then their clan followed—Yelvertons, Thorpes, and Van Zandts. They have nothing to sell."

"Haven't they?" said Mr. Fanshawe. "Not groceries and alpacas, but houses and lots. I should like to bet ducats that old Vaughn will try to inveigle those women into buying a few shares of Duke

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County Railroad, and Jim Mott will certainly get 'em to bank with him. Everybody has an axe to grind." And Mr. Fanshawe, who firmly believed that he was a bitter cynic, went on reading his newspaper, with a smile of pity for the petty, scheming world.

When Mrs. Dearborne went to a meeting of the managers of the Orphan's Home, she found her sister-workers chatting together before they proceeded to business, and the topic of conversation was Blue Cottage and its inmates. Little Mrs. Vaughn said that she was glad she had broken through her rule and called on the new-comers.

"It is a thing I rarely do," she continued, "for my circle of acquaintances is quite extensive enough, but Mr. Ziegler went, and he urged Penelope and me to go, and I am sure that we shall not regret it. Mr. Ziegler told me that Miss Lester had rented a pew in our church."

"She has *such* pretty manners," said Mrs. Van Zandt. "Jennie quite fell in love with the child—Leila, I believe they call her."

"Are they Germans?" somebody asked, and there followed a buzz of eager explanation; but when it ceased, Mrs. Dearborne said to Mrs. Mott, who had succeeded in shrilly out-explaining the rest,

"And do you know why they chose Newbroek as a place of residence?"

This was a poser. "I suppose on account of its educational advantages," she murmured. She was terribly afraid of Mrs. Dearborne. "The little girl, perhaps, is to prepare for Guy's College."

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Then a ripple of laughter widened through the group.

"They are beginning very early," said Mrs. Dearborne, grimly. "The child may know its letters, but surely it could learn to read elsewhere. You forget that pupils are not received in the college under sixteen years of age."

Mrs. Mott retreated, her face as red as her India shawl.

"*You* ought to be able to tell us why they came," said Mrs. Yelverton to Mrs. Dearborne.

"And why?" Mrs. Dearborne asked, turning towards the speaker, who was a thin-featured, finely dressed woman, the daughter of one Newbroek millionaire, the wife of another, and a blue-blooded Knickerbocker to boot. Mrs. Mott might be crushed, but never Mrs. Yelverton.

"Because you sold them the house," she replied, promptly. "You ought to know where they come from, and all about them. You would not allow people to settle next door without inquiring into their antecedents somewhat. I called there because I rely implicitly on your excellent judgment, and I know that you would not let anybody and everybody be your neighbor."

"My son transacted all the business," said Mrs. Dearborne, stiffly. "I know absolutely nothing about my new neighbors, but I mean to call there after the rush is over. People have acted like a flock of sheep, running to the cottage pell-mell."

"The meeting will please come to order," piped out the president. "Order, ladies, order."

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Then the secretary read a chapter in the Bible to disinfect the atmosphere, and the managers of the Orphans' Home proceeded to business.

Later, when Mrs. Dearborne sat opposite her son at the dinner-table, she recounted the conversation of the ladies for his benefit, and he laughed in a half-hearted way.

"Are you going to call?" he asked. "I think that you ought to; it would be only courteous. Those other women went to see how the house looked, just as they go to every funeral in town, whether they know the corpse or not."

"Chauncey!" said Mrs. Dearborne, in horror. "You should not talk so," she added, quite as though he were a boy in a pinafore. "You are falling into a shocking way of saying all sorts of things. Yes, I think I shall call," she continued, "and you ought to go, too, although I suppose it is useless to urge you. I wish you were a little more like other young men; I wish you went more into society. It is not right for you to seclude yourself as you do. Surely your studies cannot absorb all your time."

This last was spoken with a shade of sarcasm.

"Never mind about my studies," he rejoined. "As for society, what should I do among a lot of giggling girls?"

"Penelope Vaughn and Mary Yelverton are not giggling girls," said Mrs. Dearborne.

"I should not think they were!" he exclaimed. "They are too proper for me, too prim; I like a little vim in a girl. These tame cats, with their purring voices and their soft ways, frighten me. I know

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they have sharp enough claws, and can scratch on occasion."

His mother looked at him fixedly. "Do you suppose you will ever marry?" she asked, with a reluctant smile.

"Oh yes," he replied. "Why not?"

"You are too particular," she said. "I wish you would marry, Chauncey. It would be very pleasant for me to have a daughter-in-law here in the house, to relieve me of care and to be company for me."

"I will marry with a view of providing you with an excellent house-keeper," he said, dryly. "Some nice young woman, warranted to be able to keep servants in order and do the latest sort of fancy-work. Then I will go to Timbuctoo." He laughed, and looked at his mother quizzically. "How jolly it would be for the nice young woman," he added.

Dinner was over, and Mrs. Dearborne rose from the table. Her son followed her into the library, a large room, but with not many books in it, and the few imprisoned behind glass doors. The late master of the house had not been overridden by his children, and his simple taste was stamped on the plain, solid furniture and the unpretending ornaments.

"I wish, mother, you would get rid of these ghastly pictures," Chauncey said, bestowing a contemptuous glance on the engravings of Cole's "Voyage of Life."

"Your father bought those when we were first married," she said, gently.

"Oh, I forgot," he exclaimed. He had deep reverence for the affectionate respect with which she

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cherished his father's memory. It seemed to be the one soft poetic strain in her character. He wondered if any woman would love him so, if any woman would ever regard him as the best, the wisest, the truest of all men on the earth. The thought thrilled him. He went off to the billiard-room for a cigar, and while he smoked he dreamed the sweet, yearning dreams of youth. His mother's voice finally called him back to earth.

"Chauncey, where are those novels you bought the other day? I began one of them—very silly it was—'A Pair of Blue Eyes.'"

"That is not silly, that is charming," he said.

"Well, where is it? Up in your study?"

"I believe I lent that to somebody," he answered, rising hastily, "but I have a dozen others in my room."

He presently brought her an armful of novels.

"I wish you had not lent 'A Pair of Blue Eyes,'" she said, discontentedly. "It was silly, and yet I should like to know what became of Elfride."

"Oh, she died," Chauncey said, as he went back to the billiard-room. He smiled, resumed his arm-chair, and lighted another cigar. It was the smile of a man who is not dissatisfied with himself, and yet is not wholly at his ease.

"Whom did you lend the book to?" called out Mrs. Dearborne.

But if he heard this, he did not choose to answer. He sat very still for a few minutes; then stole softly up to his study, where he remained the rest of the evening.

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Chapter VIII.

When Mrs. Dearborne called on her neighbors, she found in their drawing-room a gentleman who was introduced to her as Father Ryan. He was an Irishman and a priest, and his nationality and his religion were associated in her mind exclusively with saucy servants and difficulty about Sunday morning breakfast. His presence displeased her; she resented the intrusion of such a man; he ought to stay in his place, although she had dim notions of where that was, whether in a cathedral or a kitchen. She breathed freer after he had gone.

"I do not pay many calls, but I thought that I must make the acquaintance of my new neighbors," she said.

"You are very kind," Carol returned, stealing a shy glance at her. "We did not expect to meet with the reception we have. Everybody tells us that Newbroek is inhospitable, but I cannot quite believe it."

Mrs. Milinowski sat by, bolt upright. She was very tired of seeing people; she was ungrateful enough to wish they were not so eager to welcome strangers to Newbroek. Her fund of small talk was exhausted, and she listened in silence to the amenities exchanging between her niece and the caller. But

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Mrs. Dearborne turned towards her finally, and said, graciously,

"Have you driven about much, Mrs. M—M—Milinowski? There are beautiful drives in the neighborhood. Our county is quite famous for its roads."

"I do not care for driving," was the blunt answer. "My niece does, however, and she goes out every day with Leila. They invariably get lost, but they will learn the ways before long?"

Leila now entered. She thought it great fun to meet so many people. She walked up to the caller, and extended her hand with calm self-possession.

"How do you do, little girl?" Mrs. Dearborne said, in her deepest contralto. "I see you out on the lawn every day, you and your gray kitten."

"Yes," Leila said, with her sweet, ingenuous smile, "that is my kitten; Mr. Chauncey Dearborne gave it to me ever so long ago. It runs away, but he always brings it back."

"Oh," said Mrs. Dearborne, blankly.

"Your son was kind enough to give the child a kitten," Mrs. Milinowski explained.

"But she deserts the kitten whenever Kilo comes," Carol chimed in. "She and the dog are great friends."

Mrs. Dearborne knew well that Kilo went where his master did. A resentful feeling stole slowly over her. Had her son been deceiving her all this time?

"Kilo likes biscuits," said Leila. "Mr. Dearborne says that Kilo can eat a whole biscuit bakery. Do you think he really could?"

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"I do not know," Mrs. Dearborne answered, so sharply that the child shrank away to her Aunt Carol's knee. Carol tried to lift her, but Mrs. Milinowski, as usual, remonstrated.

"You will overtax your strength. My niece had Roman fever last autumn," she added, for Mrs. Dearborne's benefit.

"Indeed? I trust she has quite recovered? You do not look like an invalid, Miss Lester."

"Thank you," Carol said, gratefully; "I am not an invalid, but I cannot say that I am entirely free yet from the effects of the fever. I think the air is very pure and good here."

Mrs. Dearborne talked mechanically about the healthfulness of Quaker Hill. Her glance chanced to fall on a book that lay face downward in a window-seat, but she could not see the title. The cover had a familiar look. She rose abruptly.

"You have a fine view southward," she said, approaching the window, "but my brother, who built this house, thought those cedars obstructed it somewhat."

She saw the title then, "A Pair of Blue Eyes."

"You are reading a novel that my son thinks highly of," she added, with a gracious smile. "I began to read it, but our copy disappeared."

"Dear me, this is your copy," said Carol. "I have finished the book, Mrs. Dearborne, and I will send it over at once. I am sorry you were interrupted in your reading. Mr. Dearborne laughs at me because I have not read many novels, and he has been kind enough to bring me several, and he promised to make

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me a list of those I ought to buy. He seems to have read everything."

"He is a great student," Mrs. Dearborne rejoined, laying hold of "A Pair of Blue Eyes." "I will save you the trouble of sending this back, Miss Lester. Since you have finished it, I will take it with me."

She lingered a little longer, chatting about the view, the fine weather, the coming summer, and then took her leave.

"Well, I like her better than any one who has called," Carol said. "Aunt Mil, she did not ask us where we came from, or why we came, or how long we meant to stay. She was stiff, but still she was not curious."

"Neither were those Vaughns," said Mrs. Milinowski; "but I wish they would not bother us so. Carol, we must have a 'day;' we cannot see people all the time. I know the cook is waiting for me to show her how to stuff the capon."

"Oh, never mind about the capon," Carol said, irreverently.

Mrs. Milinowski looked almost grieved. "I wish you cared more for what you eat, Carol. You never noticed the omelette this morning. It was very bad."

"Was it? There was enough, at any rate, and I begin to prize quantity. I have a ferocious appetite. Did you hear Mrs. Dearborne? She said I did not look like an invalid."

"I suppose that is why you like her," Mrs. Milinowski said. "You didn't suppose you looked like an invalid, did you?"

"I don't know." Carol surveyed herself in the

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mirror as she spoke. "The person who says I look like a dairy-maid, I will kiss," she exclaimed.

Mrs. Milinowski laughed and went out to the kitchen. If Carol had been a gourmet, she would have been perfect in her aunt's eyes.

Mrs. Dearborne, meanwhile, had gone directly home. No sooner did she hear her son drive up to the house than she seized the wandering novel, and fell to reading it with an air of deep interest. Chauncey walked into the library, pulling off his dog-skin gloves and whistling melodiously.

"What, mother, taken to literature in broad daylight! I thought you kept books for evening and frivolous relaxation."

He leaned over her chair, and glanced at the novel.

"Where did you get that from?" he asked. "It can't be possible that you were so eager to learn the fate of the frail Elfride that you bought another copy of the book?"

"No," she answered, without looking up. "Miss Lester had read it, so I brought it home with me."

"Ah, you have been calling there? I knew the first time you went you would be astonished. Just think, I took dinner with them one evening! Oh, I shall be going to kettle-drums next, and getting engaged once a year, like Dr. Silloway."

"There is nothing funny in deceit," said Mrs. Dearborne.

"Deceit! I never thought of deceiving you; I fancied you would laugh when you found out how plucky I had been invading the dove-cot all alone. Now don't you find them agreeable, those ladies?"

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"And you gave the child a kitten," she added, irrelevantly.

"To be sure I did, and why not?" He laughed helplessly, and still laughing, brought two letters out of his pocket. "Mildred writes she is coming up next Saturday," he continued, jumping to another subject, for he saw that his mother was a little annoyed. "And I also received a letter from Will Kenworthy, who is going West, and wants me to join the party."

"And shall you?" his mother asked.

"I may. They do not start until July, so I have plenty of time to make up my mind about it. If fluttering near the dove-cot amuses me, I will not go and catch rainbow trout this summer, but stay at home and—" he broke off and laughed at his mother, who glanced up at him imploringly. "Here is Mildred's letter," he added. "There is not much in it, except ink and long-legged hieroglyphics."

Mrs. Dearborne glanced scornfully at the sheet of paper she drew out of the envelope, for at the top was a violet crest. She despised such affectation of aristocracy as her husband had despised it, but Mildred Pelham was a fashionable New York dame, and must have her crest on her note-paper and on her carriage panel, despite the antiquated ideas of her parents.

"She will be here then to-morrow," said Mrs. Dearborne, as she replaced the letter in the envelope and returned it to her son.

Chauncey went out on the piazza and strode up and down a long time, keeping careful watch on Kilo,

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who at last slunk away over the lawn. He turned once to see if his master were looking, but Chauncey apparently did not see him, so Kilo leaped the fence and vanished in the cottage. Chauncey followed him, although it was close on the dinner-hour. The day had been lowering, and now twilight was deepening into darkness. There was a light in the library, and Carol sat there feeding Kilo Albert biscuit, the great dog crouching at her feet.

"Leila is getting dressed, and I could not disappoint the dog," she said to Chauncey. "Sit down, won't you? Your mother was here this afternoon."

"So she told me." He did not seat himself, but leaned against the mantel. "I only came to ask you to drive with me to-morrow. You need to be shown about a little."

He had never asked any young lady to drive with him before in his life, but she did not know this. And she had never gone driving alone with any man under sixty, but he did not know that. They were both a little embarrassed. When he saw that she was ill at ease, he grew quite confident and laughed.

"You know young ladies enjoy more liberty here than in the old country," he said. "And when you are in Rome, do as the Romans do. You must not import foreign customs."

She indignantly disclaimed any such intention. "I was only wondering if my aunt would like it," she said, not quite truthfully, and then Chauncey laughed again.

"You cannot convince me that Mrs. Milinowski is a terrible duenna. Whatever you do, she thinks it

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right. Come, Miss Lester, promise me you will go. I will take Kilo and a groom if you like."

He was amazed at his bold persistency; doubtless she thought he was a gay cavalier among the Newbroek girls. The idea was not displeasing to him.

"Of course, if you do not care to drive with me," he began, but she interrupted him.

"I should like to go, and I will," she said.

"How about the groom and Kilo?"

"You must choose your own company, monsieur."

"Very good; I have chosen it," he said, triumphantly. "And now, Ki, let's see who can get to the fence first."

Man and dog rushed through the French window, ran over the dark lawn, and leaped the fence together, Carol straining her eyes to see them.

The next day Miss Carrie Dow suddenly shrieked, "Melinda, Melinda! come quick," and Miss Melinda almost tumbled out of the kitchen into the front parlor. She and her sister gazed in speechless wonder at the spectacle. There was Chauncey Dearborne driving his bay horses, but in Kilo's stead Miss Lester sat beside him.

"Of course," said Miss Melinda, scornfully, "he turns up his nose at all the Newbroek girls, and falls in love with the first stranger that comes along."

"The Dow girls are watching us," Chauncey said. "They know all our goings out and comings in."

"They are harmless," said Carol, lightly.

"I am not so sure of that; I am afraid of them."

"I don't believe you are afraid of anybody."

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"That is very flattering, but the truth is I am afraid of the whole sex. I am downright bashful."

"Not bashful," said Carol. "That means awkward and clumsy; you are only shy."

"Oh, only shy. Well, that is bad enough. I admire our town bucks immensely. They swagger about, bravely walk into drawing-rooms, ask ladies to dance or to marry them with equal effrontery, and take a refusal like heroes. Why, one of my friends, a physician, Doctor Silloway, has been engaged half a dozen times, and he is as plucky as ever."

"He called at our house the other day, he and young Mr. Vaughn," said Carol.

"They did? I am not surprised to hear that the doctor called, but Will Vaughn is not a ladies' man. You have taken the town by storm, Miss Lester."

They drove southward, meeting Newbroek gigmanity—bulky dames lying in victorias; young girls in phaetons, who brandished useless whips over broad-backed, stolid ponies; sporting-men in spidery sulkies; dapper bucks in buggies; and solid old gentlemen jogging along with their wives in roomy chaises. Each had a bow for Chauncey and a stare for his companion. The bulky dames looked surprised, the girls giggled, the sporting-men winked, the bucks raised their eyebrows, and the solid old gentlemen chuckled unctuously. Chauncey enjoyed it; he knew that he had given the town a sensation.

Presently he turned from the highway into a narrow, field-bordered road, and he had not gone far when a middle-aged man astride a restless colt stopped him.

"How de do, Mr. Dearborne," he said. "I wish't

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some time you would come and see a mare I've got, sister to this one I'm on, a six-year-old, and well broke. She ain't never had a collar on her, but I guess she is as good under the saddle as they make 'em. Wait till you see her!"

"I will stop and look at her one of these days, Slater," Chauncey answered.

"I do wish't you would," said Mr. Slater, earnestly, as his colt bounded forward again.

"He always has a horse to look at," Chauncey said to Carol, "although he is popularly supposed to be a farmer. We passed his house when we turned from the highway. I must go and see his latest treasure, if it is only for the pleasure of listening to his eloquence. He can almost persuade a man that a blind and lame old brute is a desirable animal to own. He knows that I do not want a saddle-horse."

"I do," she exclaimed. "I used to ride in Berlin with my uncle. He taught me. I have been thinking of buying a saddle-horse ever since I came here."

"Perhaps I can help you," Chauncey said. "The one Slater mentioned would hardly suit you, I am afraid, for you want a kind, steady beast—"

"No, I don't; I don't want anything of the sort. What, you think I want to jog along like an old woman going to market with a basket of eggs?" She turned on him fiercely.

"Well, I dare say I can find a spirited animal," he said, soothingly. "I shall be on the lookout for you. Yonder is our farm-house. We own from this stone wall down to the river, nearly four hundred acres in all."

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His eyes flashed as he spoke, and his gaze rested proudly on the lush fields where tawny Alderney cattle grazed. The pasture-land gave way to a park-like expanse, and fine old trees stretched out their branches over the smooth, green turf.

"Our farmer lives here," he continued, pointing to a low, steep-roofed house at the roadside. "He is pretty nearly absolute master at present, but I shall oust him out by-and-by and take the reins myself."

"Fancy farming?" said Carol.

"Exactly; and if it were not for fancy farming, men would still be ploughing with a pointed stick. My father meant to build a house there on the hill for me, but he did not live to carry out the plan. It was not the only plan he left unfinished." Chauncey said this with a little sigh.

"And has he been dead long?" Carol asked, gently.

"Nearly two years. His death was very sudden. It was a terrible shock to my mother—to us all indeed."

"I know," said Carol. She hesitated and glanced up in Chauncey's face. "My only brother was lost at sea," she added, and then she told him how sorrow had come upon her. She had never told the story before, and it surprised her to find that she could tell it calmly. Chauncey listened in silence, and when she had done, he turned to her with a smile of sympathy.

"You are glad to be among your own country people again?" he said.

"Oh yes; all women ought to live in America, if they can, one of my German friends used to say."

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"Women have more liberty here," said Chauncey. He had reached the farm gate-way, and he turned his horses' heads towards town. "May I ask how you happened to choose Newbroek for a home?"

"We had looked everywhere," she answered. "We did not want to be far from New York, and New Jersey did not suit us, so we thought of the towns along the Hudson. Mr. Floyd, he is our counsellor, and he was an old friend of my brother's, saw your advertisement, and here we are. But we should never have been here if it had not been for him."

"I am very grateful to Mr. Floyd," Chauncey said.

She told him about their droll experiences when they were house-hunting, and he listened and laughed as he drove his horses swiftly over the level road. They were on the highway now, and they passed an open carriage wherein a lady sat in solitary grandeur. Chauncey raised his hat.

"It was your mother, was it not?" Carol said.

"Yes, and she is lost in wonder. I did not mention to her that I had asked you to drive with me, and she is surprised to find me without Kilo—my usual companion. I have not courage to ask the Newbroek belles to go with me."

"Thank you," she said, and he looked at her quickly.

"Oh, you do not come in the category of our Newbroek damsels. If you did we should not be out driving this fine day. You are neither Penelope Vaughn nor Mary Yelverton. And you ought to be glad of it."

"Because I thus secure the honor of a drive with Mr. Dearborne," she said.

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A dull red mounted to his cheeks, and he smiled uncomfortably.

"That did sound like a coxcomb's speech, I confess; but, you see, I am awkward; I told you I was. A bashful hobbledehoy is always saying precisely the reverse of what he wanted to say. Now, I meant—"

"Oh, never mind what you meant," she exclaimed. "Give me credit for cleverness enough to guess your meaning."

They looked at each other then, and she saw that her little thrust had not vexed him, although he had felt it. She strove all the rest of the way home to make amends, and succeeded so well that he begged her to drive with him the next day, but she would not consent.

After leaving her at the cottage, he drove directly to the railway-station for his sister, and reached there just as the train shrieked into the town. Among the passengers was Oliver Floyd, who, when he saw Chauncey, stepped forward to the carriage and shook hands with him.

"I have run up for Sunday," Floyd said; "on business, of course. Mrs. Milinowski commanded me to come, and here I am."

"You are a peripatetic counsellor," Chauncey remarked. Then he caught sight of his sister. "I am waiting for my sister," he added, "but I do not dare leave my horses for an instant."

Mrs. Pelham came out of the waiting-room, and made a triumphant progress through the throng of hackmen. She was a handsome woman of about thirty, and she dressed with severe simplicity, but

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everything she wore bore the stamp of quiet elegance. All her belongings looked like her, even her slim silk umbrella. When she drew near the carriage she looked at Floyd haughtily and bestowed a patronizing nod on her brother.

"How are you, Mildred?" he said. "Mr. Floyd, will you be good enough to help my sister a little? This wagon is too high for comfort, but I had not time to harness again and get down here. Did you give your check to a porter, Mildred?"

"Yes," she answered. "I do not need any assistance," she added, turning to Floyd, and she climbed up into the high wagon with agility, for she was lean and active like Chauncey. Floyd lifted his hat and withdrew.

"What on earth is that man doing here?" said Mrs. Pelham, in the superior way that always irritated her brother.

"I suppose he has a right to come if he wants to," he retorted. "Has he the misfortune to be one of the many who fail to meet your approval?"

"Don't be so ill-humored, and give the porter a quarter for bringing my trunk," said Mrs. Pelham. "Where did you make the acquaintance of Oliver Floyd? I hope you are not falling into bad habits, Chauncey. Perhaps you don't know his reputation. Ask Joe about him; he could tell you more than I care to."

Chauncey tightened his hold on the reins and smiled sardonically. Joe's bad opinion of a man was equal to a good recommendation in his brother-in-law's eyes.

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"I hear you are going to cut a great figure at Newport," he remarked. "I suppose Joe will play polo with the other swells; he will look well on a mustang."

The picture of pursy little Pelham on a mustang made Chauncey laugh to himself.

"I wish you would not talk about 'swells' and 'cutting a great figure,'" said his sister, sharply. "It is very bad form, Chauncey."

"Is it? Forgive the ignorance of a country bumpkin. I am not up in fashionable lingo. Bad form I can understand, thanks to Anthony Trollope and the rest of the novelists, who kindly write about great lords and ladies."

"I wish you would come to Newport with us," said Mrs. Pelham.

"And hunt the lively anise-seed bag?" he exclaimed, "and put on my dress-clothes every night? and get down on my knees to stray English tourists? and cultivate a London drawl? I am not equal to that, Mildred. I know I should forget, and say 'I guess,' and talk through my dnose. I could not stand it, and I should disgrace you."

"You are ridiculous, Chauncey. You live up here in the country and grow narrow minded and rustic."

"Yes, there is hay-seed in my hair," he said, placidly. "No use, Mildred, I was not cut out for a fine gentleman. The trail of my carpenter grandsire is over me. You are Van Kuffler to the backbone, but I am poor, plain, vulgar Dearborne."

He chuckled; he loved to torment her, loved to ridicule her aristocratic aspirations. He understood

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her perfectly; he knew that she longed to be a shining light, not in the clique of the ostentatious rich, but in the exclusive, dignified Knickerbocker circle. She looked down on people who wore diamonds in the morning, who displayed gorgeous toilets in the street, who allowed their men-servants to sport mustaches, and who made a vulgar show of their money. Every woman of Mrs. Pelham's calibre thinks that she will be happy if she gets into a certain set or is received at a certain house. Mrs. Pelham's Mecca was Mrs. Schuyler Swanevelt's drawing-room. Chauncey was well acquainted with the Swanevelt boys; he had gone to school with them, and crossed the ocean with them, but the dull-pated youth did not appreciate his privileges. He might be of great use to his sister. With his good looks and his money he might even marry into the charmed circle. Mrs. Pelham always had a secret belief that she could manage this one of these days. She did not despair; she had great hopes of Chauncey. Once could she beguile him into the maze, she would take good care that he never escaped. It was the first step that was so difficult.

"Joe is going to buy a yacht," she said. "You will go on a cruise with us, will you not?"

"Perhaps," he answered.

"Surely you don't mean to stay in Newbroek forever?"

"Why not? It is a fine healthy place."

"Chauncey, I believe you are carrying on some love affair on the sly. There is nothing else that will explain your conduct. You had better take care; you

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may get yourself into a terrible mess. These country girls are not so dull as they look."

"You measure my morals by those of the swells," he said, dryly. "I shall not be sued for breach of promise, or have to bribe a lot of people to keep their mouths shut. When I fall in love, I shall marry the girl if she be a cobbler's daughter."

"Dear me, what a noble sentiment!" Mrs. Pelham said. "That would bring down the gallery. Did you ever think that a girl could refuse you? You are the vainest man I ever knew, Chauncey, and all men are vain enough."

His cheeks tingled. It was the second time in an hour that he had been made to feel himself a coxcomb. Again he touched up his horses peevishly, and after a swift trot of ten minutes they halted before the Dearborne mansion.

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Chapter IX.

"May I ask you a question?" Floyd said. It was Sunday morning. He stood on the porch of the cottage, and he spoke to Carol, who came out dressed for church.

"Yes;" and she began to button her long dove-colored gloves.

"I should like to know why you and your aunt honor me with your confidence," he said. "You put implicit faith in me; you have given me the charge of your estate; you treat me like an old and trusted friend; you invite me here."

"Because you were the old and trusted friend of my brother," she said, "and because you have proved yourself a friend to us."

"But still, I may be a scamp; I may run away some fine day," he rejoined. "You ought to make inquiries about me; your confidence, while it is most flattering, embarrasses me a little."

She laughed, but he bit his mustache and frowned.

"Your brother must have told you a good deal about me," he added.

"Oh no," she said. "He told me once you were the prince of good fellows. You don't mind being called that, do you?"

He went to church with her that morning. On

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the way thither, a lady on horseback flew by them, her slim Kentucky mare covered with a white lather.

"That is Mrs. Fanshawe, one of my neighbors," Carol said, "the only one that has not called, and the very one I want most to know."

"Of course," Floyd remarked; "and when she does call, you will probably find her quite as uninteresting as the rest of the ladies whose cards I see on the drawing-room table. Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart have turned out to welcome you. Didn't I tell you they would?"

Carol shrugged her shoulders and said, "And Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart asked questions by the score. We grew tired of answering them. What is it to these people why we came here?"

"Oh, a great deal," he answered. "You are logical, however. You accept me without references; you expect Newbroek to accept you without references; but it isn't the way of the world. I may add, it isn't the way of prudent people. We are bound in self-defence to know something about those whom we wish to have for friends—something about their past life, their reputation, their—their history—"

He looked at her anxiously, and she laughed.

"Did you ever cheat at cards?" she asked. "Uncle Gustav used to say that cheating at cards was the one unpardonable crime a man could commit. I take it for granted that you never did commit that crime; all your other vague offences are pardoned."

He raised his hat. "Thank you," he said.

She wondered a little why he harped so persistently on one string. He had been Jack's friend, and a

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friend of Jack's must be a gentleman. Moreover, he seemed a sort of knight who had found two helpless creatures wandering, perplexed and bewildered, in a dark forest of despair, and had led them into the light of peace. She glanced at him, and he turned to her quickly.

"Ask your question," he said.

"It is no question I would ask," she replied. "I want to make you eat your own words. You said only last evening that a woman's intuition was worth more than a man's calm reasoning. Now you find fault because we women intuitively trust you. I suppose it annoys you a little, our blind confidence. We make great demands on your time and patience; we ask you to find us a home; we beg you to help us do this, that, and the other, and when we want a question answered we calmly bid you come to us and listen to our plaints. Why, Aunt Mil would have sent for you to tell us what garden tools we needed if I had not interposed. You may thank me for that."

"I am your slave," he said.

"But we want no slaves."

"I suppose this is our church," he remarked, irrelevantly; and as they mounted the steps he added, "You forget that the prison unto which we doom ourselves no prison is."

They took their seats in the church, and while the first hymn was singing there came the sound from without of a carriage dashing over the cobble-stones, and in another minute Mrs. Fanshawe walked up the aisle amid a general pursing of lips and exchanging of significant glances. Floyd and Carol looked at

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each other, raised their eyebrows, and smiled. Mrs. Fanshawe certainly was interesting. She divided the honors that day with the fine-looking man who sat in Miss Lester's pew. She was a bold, audacious woman, and was he Miss Lester's sweetheart? She had ridden horseback Sunday morning; it was outrageous to come to church afterwards. He was not young, but he had a distinguished air; he watched Miss Lester all during the sermon. Such were the comments made as the congregation wended its way homeward in groups of twos and threes.

"Here is the gentleman friend, Melinda," said Miss Carrie Dow to her sister. They had gone to the Dutch church, but now they were on guard in their front windows.

"I'd like to know what he'd say if he saw Miss Lester driving around with Chauncey Dearborne," Miss Melinda said. "They're engaged, of course. Look at him kiss that child, and carry her up to the house on his shoulder! Oh, they're engaged!"

After luncheon Floyd strolled out by himself, directing his steps southward, and soon reaching the open country. He met no one; the fields were deserted, and a Sunday quiet brooded over the landscape. He stopped awhile to rest, and from his seat on a stone wall he looked into a meadow sprinkled with daisies—

> "Continue as the stars that shine
> And twinkle on the milky-way."

He strolled on until he came to a modest farmhouse standing flush with the highway. The gate

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was open and he entered. A great dog trotted forward bow-wowing a welcome, and then trotted back at once to the barn. Floyd looked into the kitchen. It was deserted, save for a brindled cat that lay in the middle of the floor with two or three kittens tumbling about her. From the barn came the sound of voices, and following it he found a stout, middle-aged man, a rosy-cheeked girl, and Chauncey Dearborne, all three looking at a fine bay mare.

"Well, I turned in here to get a glass of water," Floyd said. "I didn't expect to meet you, Mr. Dearborne."

"I'll get you a glass o' water or milk or cider in a minute," said the farmer, who was Mr. Slater, the breaker of horses. "We was a-lookin' at this mare, sir. Mr. Dearborne wants a saddle-horse for a lady, and this is the very thing, ain't it, Mary?"

His daughter Mary smiled, showing a space where she had lost one of her best front teeth.

"*She* broke 'Arabella,'" Mr. Slater continued, proudly, "and if I sell Arabella, she can have the money. That's fair, ain't it?"

"Perfectly fair," Chauncey answered. He looked at the mare's legs critically, and then he grasped her mane and vaulted on her back. He leaned forward, passed the halter through her mouth, and sent her off over the turf.

"He can ride," said Mary.

"Well, some," her father said, emphatically.

Chauncey galloped around bareback, but presently came and put a saddle and bridle on Arabella.

"Can she take a fence?" he asked.

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"I never tried," Mary answered, "but she can get out o' any pasture we put her in."

He laughed, touched the mare with the whip, and rode her straight towards a low stone wall. She went over it like a bird, flew across the meadow, and mare and man disappeared in a clump of trees beyond.

"And now, sir, we will have some cider," said Mr. Slater to Floyd. "My wife has gone to spend the day with her sister, so Mary and I can rampage around as we like, eh, Mary?"

They went into the kitchen and sat down. Mary brought the cider, and supplemented it with some remarkable gingerbread full of raisins.

"This recalls my boyhood days," Floyd said. He understood just how to talk to a man like farmer Slater, and within ten minutes he knew all about him and his daughter. Mary wanted to go to boarding-school, and Arabella was to pay for a year in a Newbroek seminary.

"A man's bound to give his children all they want in the learnin' line," said Mr. Slater. "I have got a boy at Yale now; smart fellow he is. When he gits through, he is goin' to be a lawyer. Mary here, I guess she'll have to stay with her dad, and help him break horses. There comes Dearborne. By George, the mare can't take those bars!"

Mr. Slater sprang to the door, followed by his daughter and Floyd. "She can't do it!" he shouted hoarsely to Chauncey, who was sending the mare towards the bars. "Go back, you fool, go back!" He raised both his hands, but before he could lower them, Ara-

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bella had leaped the bars and Chauncey was patting her neck.

"By gum!" said Mr. Slater, profoundly. "If that fellar was only poor, what a jockey he'd make!"

"I am too heavy," said Chauncey, coming up to the group. His face was flushed and his dark eyes shone. "Whoa, Arabella. Treat her to a lump of sugar, Mary. She is a good girl." So saying, he dismounted.

"And will you give me four hundred dollars for her?" said Mary.

"I should not be surprised if I gave you three hundred," he answered, and Mary's face fell. "Oh, four hundred," he added, hastily. "I cannot dicker with a rosy young woman," he murmured to Floyd. The latter smiled and nodded; then put his hands into his trousers pockets and scrutinized Mary critically. After one glance towards him her cheeks flushed, and she drew near to Chauncey, who listened to her with the unconscious deference that he showed to any creature in petticoats.

"You see, sir," said Mary, "I want to go to boarding-school next winter, and Arabella will pay for me; but it is three hundred a year at the seminary, and music and drawing are extra." She paused. "And—and I want music and drawing," she added.

She smiled and blushed deeper.

"All right, Mary," Chauncey said, gently. "I will try to get four hundred for the mare. You must let me have her a week on trial."

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Slater, meanwhile, had led Arabella off to the stable, and he now returned with Chauncey's high, red-wheeled wagon and bay team.

"That nigh horse o' yourn has got a little swelling on the knee," he remarked.

"Of course," Chauncey said, resignedly. "It is only our own crows that are snow-white. Bring Arabella to our stables to-morrow. Come, Mr. Floyd; you must drive home with me." Then he raised his hat to Mary, and gathered up the reins. "Miss Lester told me she wanted a saddle-horse," he continued, "and I am trying to find one for her. Do you not think Arabella will serve her purpose?"

"I dare say," said Floyd. He wondered why Carol had not asked him to look up a saddle-horse; it seemed as though Chauncey Dearborne were an usurper. "It is a delicate matter," he added, "to buy a horse for a lady. I am glad you have the responsibility, not I."

"I had not thought of it in that light," said Chauncey, with sudden misgivings. "Of course I shall try the mare myself carefully, and for a few times I will go with Miss Lester until she knows Arabella. Then— Well, then if anything happens, I suppose I shall be a miserable man."

"Yes, you would not like to see Miss Lester dragged home some day," Floyd said, cheerfully. "I don't know how good a horsewoman she is."

Chauncey was suddenly cast down in despair; he had started out eager to be of service to his neighbor, and confident of his success in finding just the horse for her. Now his eagerness and his confidence van-

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ished. As his spirits fell, Floyd's rose in proportion. He warmed to his task.

"That rosy-cheeked lass knows how to aid and abet her father," he remarked. "She is a sharp trader; she is shrewd enough to work on the sympathies of us men. I felt exactly as you did when she got all that off about going to school. She looked up so appealingly, and begged for the odd hundred with such an adorable blush that I wanted to chuck her under the chin, and tell her she should have music and drawing, so she should. Comedy acting comes as naturally to women as gullibility to men. A blush, a shy look, a tear—and we turn our pockets inside out."

Chauncey laughed uneasily. He had never suspected Mary Slater of comedy acting; he did not believe it now, and he was man enough to say so.

"Her father is as sharp as you please," he added, "but Mary was in earnest. I am a fool, perhaps, but I still think that the girl wants the money to go to school with, and is particularly eager to get the odd hundred for her music."

"Oh, there is no doubt whatsoever about her eagerness," said Floyd, in a tone that made Chauncey wonder whether he could turn the carriage into a ditch without doing much injury to his horses or himself. Then his sense of humor came to his aid. He was enraged because Floyd had cast a slur on the sincerity of Miss Mary Slater, and he burst out laughing.

"Well?" said Floyd, interrogatively.

"Oh, I only laughed to think what an ass I am," Chauncey said.

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His spirits revived. He did not care what this cantankerous lawyer might say, and he left Floyd at the cottage, at peace with him and all the world.

When he reached home it was hardly five o'clock, and his mother and sister were in their rooms, but they came down soon and proposed a stroll about the grounds. The sun hung low in the west, the long rays just touching the gilt vane on the stable roof. From the town came the faint sound of church-bells summoning the faithful to evening prayer. Mrs. Dearborne and her daughter talked together in subdued tones, while Chauncey walked beside them in contented silence. On the other side of the fence was Oliver Floyd. He wore a little velvet jacket and a jaunty cap, and in his mouth was a pipe. With his hands clasped behind his back, he paced slowly to and fro over the grass, the picture of serene happiness. Mrs. Pelham's sharp eyes soon spied him.

"Does he live next door?" she asked. "I thought, mamma, that two ladies had bought the place? He looks very much at home there."

Mrs. Dearborne put on her eye-glasses. "Oh, Mr. Floyd; he is the lawyer and particular friend. I believe he is going to marry Miss Lester, although Chauncey scouts the idea because he has a gray mustache. He is quite a handsome man."

Mrs. Pelham smiled. "He is not too good, but too wise to commit bigamy," she said.

"Bigamy!" echoed her mother.

"Yes, he has a wife; she lives in Dresden, and he lives in New York. Some people prefer matrimony

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served *à la Russe*, each dish by itself. It prevents indigestion, they say."

Chauncey laughed softly, but Mrs. Dearborne looked at the unsuspicious Floyd with vague displeasure. At that moment he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and advanced towards Carol, who, in a white dress, came swiftly over the grass. Then Leila rushed after her. The child took Floyd's left hand and Carol's right, and thus they walked together.

"Family group," said Mrs. Pelham. "How sweetly pretty! Mrs. Floyd in Dresden is doubtless one of just such another group."

But now Chauncey did not smile. He held his tongue, however, although he had a strong desire to bid his sister quit her insinuating speeches. It took some time for an idea to percolate into Mrs. Dearborne's brain; it took that same idea even longer to get out.

"Well," she said, at last. Then she stopped for a full minute. "What sort of man is this Mr. Floyd?"

"Of the bold, bad sort," her daughter answered, lightly. "He is not received at a single house in New York. He keeps bachelor quarters, he gives fine dinners, he invites men to go down to his shooting-box for a month's orgy—men like him, of course, and they go with him, of course. Joe says his rooms are elegant, and his Sunday dinners are famous—perfect banquets."

"I hope he will invite me to one of them," said Chauncey.

His mother and sister looked at him.

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"You would not go?" said Mrs. Dearborne, in her deepest tones.

"You would lose every penny at poker if you did," added Mrs. Pelham, with a subtle smile.

He chuckled, and assumed a tantalizing, mischievous expression.

"I have always wanted to know a real wicked man," he began, "a sort of Don Juan, Rochester, gay Lothario fellow, and here is the chance. But I cannot believe in Mr. Floyd; he is not much wickeder than I am, I fear." Then Chauncey shook his head mournfully. "Your description is Oriental, Mildred. It sounds like a bit out of one of Disraeli's novels. The Young Duke had a Twickenham villa, you remember, and an Alhambra, and a Bird of Paradise."

Mrs. Pelham glanced over the fence without a word, and her brother's face flushed with anger.

"You do well to confine your malicious innuendoes to glances," he said, savagely.

For one instant he hesitated; then turned on his heel, walked over the sloping lawn, leaped the fence, and joined the group on the other side. He greeted Carol with ostentatious warmth, and he picked up Leila and perched her on his shoulder, a proceeding which amazed Carol and Floyd, for he had always acted as though he were afraid of the child.

Mrs. Pelham was dumfounded. Was that her shy, reserved brother, who fled from young ladies in terror?

"Mamma!" she gasped.

"Let us go into the house," said Mrs. Dearborne. "Yes, Mildred, he is infatuated. He has been going

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there ever since those people came, but he never told me; I found it out accidentally. And he carries her books, and he takes her to drive, and he is there every day. I confess I found them very well-mannered and lady-like when I called."

"Them?" repeated Mrs. Pelham.

And then Mrs. Dearborne told her all she could about Mrs. Milinowski and Miss Lester. She did not forget to say that the best people in the town had called at Blue Cottage.

"Oh, well, perhaps they are not so bad as I thought," Mrs. Pelham said. "Still it is very indiscreet in them to choose Mr. Floyd as a friend and counsellor. I don't doubt that the stories about him are exaggerated; but two lone women cannot be careful enough how they avoid anything that might give rise to scandal. They must know his reputation. If I were you, mamma, I would not go there often, and I would let somebody else tell what sort of man Oliver Floyd is."

"I am no gossip," said Mrs. Dearborne, grimly, "but somebody else will tell what sort of man Oliver Floyd is, you may be sure of that. I wish Chauncey would not go there so often."

Mrs. Pelham smiled. "It takes a shy man to startle the world," she said. "If you are not careful, mamma, Chauncey will startle you."

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Chapter X.

Mrs. Pelham and Mr. Floyd had an opportunity of studying each other the next day, for they went to New York in the same car. That week Chauncey spent mostly in riding Arabella, and on Friday he led her over to the cottage.

"I have been trying her for you," he said to Carol, "and as far as I can see, she is free from faults. To be sure, she is not a tame, humdrum beast, but if you can ride—"

"Oh, I can ride," said Carol. "I don't want a tame, humdrum beast."

She gave Arabella a lump of sugar, and stroked her shining neck.

"She is as good as she looks, Miss Lester," he said. "I advise you to buy her. Her owner wants four hundred dollars for her, and she is worth it."

Carol wrinkled her brow. "Mr. Floyd says he can buy me a good saddle-horse for three hundred."

"Oh, he said that, did he? Well, I will leave Arabella here for you to try, and perhaps her owner will take three hundred."

The mare was led off to the stable, and Chauncey followed Carol into the cottage.

"You must let me ride with you when you try Arabella," he said.

"Must I, indeed?"

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"That is, I hope you will let me."

"I will let you, provided you don't go with an idea of protecting me. I am perfectly able to take care of myself afoot or on horseback." He was a trifle too peremptory; he needed discouragement, she thought.

"Oh, well, then I cannot go," he said, "for it is impossible to get rid of an idea, even at your command. But I am going with you, Miss Lester, and I am going with you to protect you, until you have learned to know Arabella's tricks and manners."

She stood wavering between anger and amusement, but the smile conquered the frown.

"We shall see," she said.

"Ah, you mean to run away!" Chauncey exclaimed, springing from his chair. "I shall be on the watch; you cannot ride Arabella out of the gate without my seeing you."

They stood face to face, both smiling a little, both eager and excited.

"What a boy you are," Carol said, frankly. "I don't believe you are more than sixteen years old."

"I am twenty-six; how old are you?"

"That is impertinent."

"I know it, but boys are always impertinent."

"You are not a boy."

"You just said that I was; you change your mind. How old are you, Miss Lester?"

"Twenty-two," she answered. "There, if you are a boy, you must run home, for I am going out to drive with Leila."

"And we try Arabella to-morrow morning?" he asked, pausing in the door-way.

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She nodded. "To-morrow morning at ten o'clock," she said.

She went at once to the stable. "James, have you cleaned my bridle?"

"Yes, 'm."

"Is the saddle in order?"

"Yes, 'm."

"Very well; bring Arabella to the door to-morrow morning at half-past seven."

Meanwhile, Chauncey had gone to his stable.

"Pat, how early in the morning are you here?"

"About five o'clock, sir."

"Groom Buckskin first. I may ride before breakfast."

"All right, sir; Buckskin will be ready for you."

Chauncey chuckled, and went into the house. That night he wound a little alarm-clock and set it to go off at five o'clock, and he was awakened the next morning by a loud whir in his ear. It bewildered him for a moment; then he remembered, and rose and dressed. He peered out of the window. Everything was quiet at the cottage, and the stable doors were shut. He put on his hat, seated himself astride a chair, and waited patiently, smoking a cigarette. The sun was up, shining red through the haze, and the birds were twittering together blithely. A milkman, who had made his rounds, drove home, reading a paper, his empty cans jingling together behind him. A few laborers tramped past, swinging their dinner-pails. Down in town six o'clock struck. At that moment a man flung open the back door of the cottage. It was James. He cast a knowing look at the

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sky, and went towards the stable slowly, his hands in his pockets. Presently he re-appeared with a bridle which he examined carefully, then swung it up over a nail in the door-way, and rubbed the bit with a piece of chamois-skin. Chauncey stole softly down-stairs. The cook was stirring about, and she gave him some bread and milk, which he ate with one eye on the cottage. He had the satisfaction of seeing the shutters of an upper window gently opened; his heart gave a quick throb, and the blood mounted to his face. Quitting the kitchen, he skulked along behind the shrubbery to the stable. Pat was there, polishing Buckskin's chestnut coat.

"Will I saddle him, sir?"

"Yes, saddle him; but there is no hurry," Chauncey answered. He lighted another cigarette and sat down in the door-way. Seven o'clock struck. He was conscious of a growing excitement; the hand that held the cigarette trembled. James now brought out Arabella, and gave her a pail of water at the pump.

"Put the saddle on Buckskin," Chauncey said. When the horse was ready, he vaulted into the saddle, and Pat handed him his whip; then stepped back to let him pass, but Chauncey did not stir. He lighted a third cigarette.

"I am in no hurry," he said; and there he sat until James led Arabella to the cottage, until Carol mounted and rode away. Then, "Come, Buckskin," said he, and the big chestnut stepped forward proudly.

Chauncey let Carol ride on alone for some time. He admired her square, firm seat in the saddle, her erect figure, her pretty, sloping shoulders. Clearly,

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she knew how to ride; she had been well taught. He felt unreasonably proud of her, and he put Buckskin to a quick trot that soon brought him beside her.

"Good-morning, Miss Lester."

"Oh—Mr. Dearborne! Good-morning. You are out early."

Then they laughed like two children, and rode side by side for an hour.

Carol bought Arabella, and paid three hundred and fifty dollars for her, but Miss Mary Slater deposited four hundred dollars in the Newbroek Savings Bank. Chauncey had simply bought the mare and re-sold her. He would have sold her to Carol for three hundred dollars, or two hundred. What was a trifling matter of money compared to carrying his point? He was determined to supply Miss Lester with a saddle-horse, despite a dozen legal advisers and family friends. And he rode with her persistently, although she made gallant efforts to escape him. She might ride out the back gate, she might imagine he was down town, she might go early or late, he always galloped after her. It became her sole ambition to elude him, and she finally succeeded one fine June morning. As she rode along, she glanced back over her shoulder every time she heard the sound of hoofs, expecting to see him, smiling triumphantly as usual, but he was never in sight, and she was disappointed, although she tried to persuade herself that she was delighted. She turned Arabella down a lane that led towards a deserted mill, and presently she heard the fall of a horse's hoofs, unmingled with the rattle of

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wheels. She smiled. He was following her. She rode faster; so did her pursuer; she pressed Arabella into a gallop, but the horse behind galloped too. At last she reached the mill, and there was nothing to do but go into the river or turn around. She put Arabella about, and came face to face with Mrs. Fanshawe, who smiled and bowed.

"Good-morning, Miss Lester," she said. "You have led me a pretty race, but I was determined to catch up with you, and I have. They say a ghost of a miller walks here. Have you ever seen him?"

"No. Have you?" she replied.

"Not yet, but I come often to look for him, and with the aid of a strong imagination I expect to see him some day." She brought her horse along-side Arabella. "Perhaps I ought to introduce myself," she added. "I am Mrs. Fanshawe, a neighbor of yours."

"I have been hoping to make your acquaintance," Carol said.

"And I have been meaning to call ever since I saw you on horseback. I believe we are the only two women in Newbroek who ride. Newbroek doesn't consider it feminine, and Newbroek is autocratic."

Mrs. Fanshawe smiled as she said this, and put her hand up to her heavy coil of braids. She was not a pretty woman, but a very pleasing one to look at with her clear olive skin, her bright, dancing eyes, and masses of black hair. She was painfully thin, and her large mouth was full of even little teeth, white and sharp like a dog's.

"My hair is always tumbling down," she contin-

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ued, plaintively. "If it were not for Tom, I would cut if off. Tom is my husband. There!" and she thrust in a hair-pin viciously. "He says long hair is a glory to a woman. It is the only line he remembers in the Bible."

"Does Mr. Fanshawe never ride with you?" Carol asked.

"Never. He is too heavy, he says, but in truth he doesn't like it, so I go by myself. Do you think I ought to give it up because he does not care to ride?"

"No, indeed."

"And do you think I ought to learn to play whist, which I abhor, because he dotes on it?"

Carol smiled. "I should as soon say you ought to smoke because he probably does."

Mrs. Fanshawe burst out laughing. "I do smoke once in a while, but Newbroek thinks that criminal, yet Newbroek sternly says that a wife should model her tastes after her husband's. Therefore, I ought to play whist, and ought not to ride. It would be logical to say that I ought to smoke, too, would it not, Miss Lester?"

"I don't know much about logic," Carol answered, "but I should do as I pleased."

"You are a wise woman," Mrs. Fanshawe said, "although you did deliberately choose to live in this stuffy little town. I am coming to see you to-morrow; not, however, in a black silk gown, an India or lace shawl, and with a mother-of-pearl card-case held in my hand. I have seen the Philistines trooping into the cottage dressed in their Sunday clothes. You and Mrs. Milinowski are all the rage. You have con-

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quered even Chauncey Dearborne, and now I am going to swell the list of victims, though I vowed that I would not. I hate calls as much as Chauncey does. He is a fine boy, don't you think?"

Mrs. Fanshawe glanced at her cunningly and then smiled.

"Mr. Dearborne has been very kind and courteous to us," Carol said, with a touch of haughtiness. She struck Arabella sharply. Mrs. Fanshawe spoke to her horse, and when, after a spirited trot, they began to talk again it was not about the merits of Chauncey Dearborne. They had now reached the highway, and a neat buggy whirled by them, Doctor Silloway holding the reins over a dashing roan. He lifted his hat and smiled his beaming smile, and he told all his lady patients that Mrs. Fanshawe was cultivating the acquaintance of Miss Lester. It was the first but not the last time these two were seen riding together, and Newbroek drew an inference from the budding intimacy that was not quite favorable to Carol. Mrs. Fanshawe belonged to a staid old family in the town, but as a girl she had shown a tendency towards gayety, which, after her marriage, deepened into what was called downright fastness. Nevertheless she had hosts of friends who defended her conduct warmly, and women who held up their hands at her sayings and doings sent her invitations to their germans, their card-parties, their kettle-drums, confident that where Mrs. Fanshawe was, dulness could not be. But her dearest friends admitted that she was indiscreet, and a good many old-fashioned folks looked on her with suspicion and prophesied a dismal end.

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When Carol reached the cottage that morning Chauncey Dearborne met her on the porch.

"I have been waiting for you," he said. "You think you ran away from me? I saw you go; you were so excited that you dropped your whip, and Jim rushed after you and picked it up."

"Then why didn't you follow me?" she asked, in aggrieved tones.

He took her hand, and she slipped lightly down to the ground.

"Did you miss me?" he said, eagerly.

"Oh no. I met Mrs. Fanshawe, and we scraped acquaintance. It was the loveliest ride I have had in Newbroek."

His face fell. "I did not follow you because you do not need my protection," he said. "I only went because I felt responsible for Arabella. I will not inflict myself on you again." Then he smiled.

Carol grasped her habit and turned on him quickly. "And Arabella has caused you sleepless nights?" she said; "and made you get up at daybreak? I am glad she need not trouble you any longer. Good-morning."

She passed into the house, leaving Chauncey to walk homeward in a pensive frame of mind. He had read Balzac, but for all that he did not know whether Carol was vexed because he had ridden with her hitherto, or had not ridden with her this morning, or had felt responsible for the mare. He had blundered somewhere.

"Chauncey," his mother said, "I wish you would try to be a little more punctual. Luncheon has been

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on the table ten minutes at least; and there is a letter for you."

He read the letter hastily. "Will Kenworthy is going to start for the West sooner than he expected," he said, seating himself at the table. He unfolded his napkin slowly and dropped it over his knee. "I have about made up my mind not to go with him; he has got too big a party."

"Why don't you tell the truth?" said Mrs. Dearborne. "Why don't you say that you cannot leave your fascinating neighbor? How did you happen to let her ride out alone this morning?"

He looked at his mother in amusement and surprise.

"You always told me that I should go about with the girls, but when I do, you do not seem particularly pleased."

"I meant the Newbroek girls."

"Well, is not Miss Lester one of them?" he asked, carelessly.

Mrs. Dearborne shook her head. "I should think you would be more careful after what Mildred told us," she said.

"Mildred told us about Mr. Floyd. I do not ride with him. And, mother, it is all humbug about him anyway. He does not live with his wife, but perhaps that is not his fault. Mrs. Milinowski and Miss Lester have nothing to do with that."

"They ought not to have such a man for their friend," said Mrs. Dearborne. "They must know his reputation, and it is brazen in them to thus run counter to public opinion."

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"'Brazen' is good," Chauncey remarked, dryly.

"I might say something worse," added his mother.

"It is magnanimous of you to refrain. He is an old friend; he knew Miss Lester when she was a child, and he was a classmate of her brother's. Then, too, he is their lawyer, and it is very natural he should have more than a professional interest in them. But there is no use saying all this. You have taken one of your terrible prejudices, and nothing short of an earthquake could make you change your opinion."

"And we don't have earthquakes here," Mrs. Dearborne said, with a wintry smile.

"We never have had one," he rejoined, "but that does not promise that we never shall."

Carol's remark that she had had her loveliest ride in Newbroek without him piqued him a little. He did not go to the cottage for a week. He met her riding with Mrs. Fanshawe, he passed her walking along the street, and finally he saw her drive out one day with Will Vaughn. On the evening of that day he called at the cottage, but no sooner had he entered the hall than the hum of voices in the drawing-room alarmed him. It was too late to go back, so he advanced fearfully. He was conscious of a roomful of people, he felt hundreds of eyes turned on him, he knew he was bowing and murmuring something to Carol, and he came to his senses slowly to find himself safe in a corner. The roomful of people shrank, and the hundreds of eyes dwindled to ten or twelve. There was Carol talking to the white-bearded rector of St. Paul's, there was

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Doctor Silloway, there was Mrs. Milinowski, and there was Tom Fanshawe.

"And so you, too, have become neighborly?" said Mrs. Fanshawe. He had not seen her, but she was seated on the sofa beside him. He made some vague reply, and listened to her chatter until she and the other guests took their leave. Then he rose and approached Carol.

"If I had known there was such a crowd here, I would have stayed away," he said. "My knees shook when I came into the drawing-room. Take me into the library, please, for this is the scene of my misery and shame."

She laughed, and led the way towards the library. On the threshold her dress caught, and he stooped to free it from a splinter in the sill.

"Did you come to see me?" she asked, glancing down at him over her shoulder.

"Of course; whom else should I come to see?"

"Arabella," she answered, and as she spoke she turned in the door-way and faced him.

He looked at her in wonder. Not until now had he noticed how great a change had been wrought in her during the past few weeks, and it flashed upon him that he had never seen her before. There was a faint flush in her cheeks, a gleam of triumph in her eyes, and as she stood before him, with a mocking smile on her full red lips, she seemed to throw the glove at his feet. He glanced at her slim hands. They were no longer transparent; a man might grasp them without a sensation of pitying amazement that hands should be so fragile.

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"Well?" she said. "And Arabella?"

He rose from his kneeling posture. "I care for Arabella only when she carries her mistress," he said. "We must have a long ride to-morrow. It is a week since we rode together."

He took the chair she offered, but he was too restless to sit quietly, and after a few minutes he began to walk about the little library like a caged beast. His collar choked him, the roses in the room made the air heavy, and he drew a great breath of relief when he found himself alone in the dusky, silent garden. He did not go home, but strolled up and down the road, watching the light gleam through the trees from a window that he knew was hers. A house-door slammed somewhere, and in the silence that followed he heard footsteps behind him coming closer, and then a voice said, cheerfully,

"Studying astronomy, Chaunce?"

"Ah, doctor," he returned, "you have been at the Fanshawes', studying tobacco and cakes and ale."

"Yes, and uncommonly good stuff to study, too. But if I had a wife she shouldn't find Mrs. Fanshawe fascinating. She is the most reckless woman I know. Her cousin, Teddy Perry, arrived from New York this evening, and she—well, my mythical wife would not welcome her men cousins twice with such warmth. But that chuckle-headed, fat husband of hers thinks she is all right."

"So she is," said Chauncey, stoutly.

"What, do you approve of her skylarking about with Theodore Perry? She would have married him if—"

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"If she had wanted to, and he had asked her," Chauncey said, with a frown that in the darkness was lost on the gossiping doctor. "Oh, there is nothing the matter with Mrs. Fanshawe, except that she ought to have married somebody who would not let her run her head against telegraph-poles. I like her."

"Whew!" whistled Doctor Silloway. "Well, the women are all down on her, and they are all mad with delight over Miss Lester. She will be asked to join our tennis club next—I know there is such a plan on foot. I suppose you know you are a member of the club?"

"I hear so," Chauncey answered. "I have a polite invitation in my pocket now to pay fines for not presenting myself at important meetings."

"Perhaps," said the doctor, "if Miss Lester becomes a member, you won't have so many fines to pay. Oh, here is your gate. Good-night."

Chauncey went slowly towards the house. He looked across to the cottage, and saw the light still gleaming out from the upper window, but while he looked the light vanished.

"Good-night, sweetheart," he said, softly. "Good-night."

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Chapter XI.

"Will," said Penelope Vaughn to her brother, "I wish you would propose Miss Lester for membership in the club."

The club was the Elmhill Tennis Club, and Penelope was its president. It met that June afternoon on her father's lawn, and when Will rose and proposed Miss Lester's name, Dr. Silloway promptly seconded it. A week must elapse before the vote could be taken, and during the week Carol was well discussed.

"Of course it is Pen's doing," said Mrs. Thorpe, the club matron, a young woman who prided herself upon being vivacious without being too gay.

"Of course," echoed Bertha Douglass, the club flirt, who declared she was descended from the Earl of Douglass.

"So much for being a slim, interesting creature, with big eyes," said Mary Yelverton, languidly. "She is very intimate with Mrs. Fanshawe," she added.

"She knows no better," cried Mrs. Thorpe. "After awhile she will learn."

"Perhaps," said Mary Yelverton, dubiously.

The club was ultra exclusive, and it was daring of Penelope to propose Carol's name, but Penelope could be daring when she chose. It so happened that the club met on a lowering afternoon to vote on the im-

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portant question of Miss Lester's eligibility, and the men were out in force, while the girls were badly represented. Still, there was a quorum, and that sufficed. Miss Lester was unanimously elected a member, and Penelope smiled in her sleeve.

Carol was surprised by the faultless note that young Mr. Yelverton, the secretary, sent to her, announcing her election. She did not know that there was a tennis club, and her notions of the game were extremely hazy, but at the same time it was an honor to be elected to anything, and she felt vaguely gratified. She resolved to ask Mrs. Fanshawe about it. The day was so warm that she disdained to put on her hat, and she strolled across the road beneath a parasol.

"She is going to Mrs. Fanshawe's," quoth Miss Melinda, "and without her hat! And without gloves! That's pretty familiar."

"I guess Mrs. Fanshawe has found a kindred spirit at last," Miss Carrie said. "They are both horsey, and I guess they are both pretty lively. Did you see 'em come galloping home last night, Chauncey Dearborne tearing after 'em? They will all be killed some day if they ain't careful. Mr. Floyd had better look after his lady-love."

"Carrie," said Miss Melinda, "Mrs. Mott says that she was at school with a girl named Eva Coleman, and she married a lawyer named Floyd. He treated her badly, and she left him. And she says that it is this Mr. Floyd. And she lives in Europe."

Miss Carrie understood, in spite of the conglomeration of shes. "Oh ho!" she said, with a wise wag of her head and a significant lifting of her eyebrows.

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Then the full enormity of the revelation burst upon her. "Why, Melinda!" she exclaimed in horror.

Carol made her way towards Mrs. Fanshawe's, and was met at the gate by two or three handsome setters and a silky cocker spaniel. Their yelps of joy brought out their mistress, who boxed their ears and kissed Carol.

"Come into the house and sit down. I am so glad you came over. Peter, charge this instant, charge, do you hear me? Oh, these dogs!"

She broke off a switch and thrashed them impartially, but the beating put them into transports of delight, and they ran about, tumbling over one another in a joyous frenzy.

Mrs. Fanshawe led her guest to a small parlor back of the drawing-room, and then Carol silently held out the club note. Mrs. Fanshawe read it, and looked at her in mock awe.

"My dear, it is a triumph," she said, solemnly. "Who said that a victory was the next saddest thing to a defeat? Well, it applies in this case. It is so flattering to be elected to the club—and so doleful! The air in the holy of holies is rare. You will be suffocated by the atmosphere of prunes and prisms."

"Then I won't join," said Carol, promptly. "I don't want to be suffocated."

"Oh, you must! I fancy you will find it rather funny, in spite of its grandeur. They are all so polite and prim! Once in awhile they invite in the rabble, and then Tom and I go. You would die of laughter if you could see Tom bow and scrape, and try to talk pretty to Miss Yelverton. She is such a

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die-away thing. She reads Tasso; Penelope Vaughn quotes Chaucer. Oh, they are cultured up to the eyes. But deportment is their forte. They are distressingly polite, overwhelmingly elegant."

"Am I up to their standard?" Carol asked. "I might quote Schiller. Would it do any good?"

"Heaps of good; but never forget to turn your toes out, whatever else you do. They are so civil; they are never off duty. If anybody drops a racket, everybody else rushes to pick it up. They never contradict one another without saying 'pardon me.' Life must be a burden under such circumstances."

"Does Chauncey Dearborne belong?" Carol asked.

Mrs. Fanshawe swallowed a smile. "Yes, he belongs, but he is an absentee. They say he went once to play, and Miss Yelverton fainted because he said 'By George!' when a tennis-ball hit him in the eye. You may put that down to my malice and envy. I could not get into the club if I begged for admittance on my bended knees. It is a triumph for you, Carol. Must I say Miss Lester to the end of my days?"

While they talked, the smell of tobacco floated into the parlor, and from the adjoining billiard-room came the sharp click of ivory balls. Finally, a mellow barytone sang the first verse of "Drink to Me only with thine Eyes."

"Teddy, be still," said Mrs. Fanshawe. "Do you know there is company?"

"I hope the company doesn't object to music that hath charms to soothe even the savage breast," said Mr. Perry.

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He stood in the door-way, holding a billiard cue, and looking at Carol with calm curiosity, while she recognized the bald-headed dandy who had stared so that evening in the theatre.

"Well," he said, as soon as he had been introduced, "you must allow me to say, Miss Lester, that Newbroek air has done wonders for you. I remember seeing you at the theatre with Mr. Floyd, but I should hardly have recognized you. Perhaps, if I stayed here long enough, I should grow young and beautiful again." He passed his hand over his bald pate with a rueful smile.

"Oh, Newbroek is healthy," Mrs. Fanshawe said. "People die here of old age. It is a sad lookout for us. Teddy, please let in the dogs; they will scratch that door down."

"I heard them raising a great racket awhile ago," he remarked as he obeyed her. "I fancied they were scaring off some old woman who had come prowling about. You know, Miss Lester, that Mrs. Fanshawe keeps the dogs to frighten off the town gossips."

"And who are the town gossips?" Carol asked.

"Who are they not?" Mr. Perry echoed. "I am inclined to think that my cousin here is rather the worst of the lot. But a young woman's gossip hasn't the fine fruity flavor of an old woman's. As somebody says, old wine, old books, and old women."

Mr. Perry had been lately bitten by the Anglomania. He affected the English pronunciation and intonation, and his clothes were of London cut. Over his smoking-jacket dangled a single eye-glass, which

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he now screwed into place and looked through it benignly at the spaniel on the rug at his feet.

"And how do you like Newbroek?" he said to Carol.

"Very much. Don't you?"

"Yes, when I am away from it. Curious lot of people live here."

"I wonder why any one lives here," Mrs. Fanshawe said. "I was born and brought up in the town, but I hope to get to New York some day, if the baking-powder holds its own."

"What has baking-powder to do with it?" Carol asked.

Mrs. Fanshawe clasped her hands in despair. "This then is fame! Have you never heard of Fanshawe's baking-powder? Take no other. Beware of fraudulent imitations. Endorsed by over a hundred chemists, and used in every house in the country. And you never heard of it? Tom has advertised in vain."

"Not quite in vain," Mr. Perry said, with a significant glance about the room. Then he looked towards Carol, and let his glass drop from his eye. "Miss Lester, did you know that Oliver Floyd was ill?"

"Ill? Seriously ill?" she said.

Mrs. Fanshawe and her cousin exchanged a glance, for the color had gone out of Carol's face.

"Oh, not seriously ill, perhaps," said Perry, hastily. "It is more overwork than anything else. He works like a galley-slave."

"But why does he not go somewhere and rest?" cried Carol.

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"He says he has no time. He has a shooting-box in Virginia, and he usually spends a fortnight there every spring, but this year he would not go; said he was too busy."

"It is foolish to work so hard," said Mrs. Fanshawe. "Perhaps, though, he works to drive dull care away."

This Carol did not understand, but she understood why it was that Floyd had lost his vacation that spring. He had given the time to the affairs of two troublesome women; she felt selfish, base, wicked.

"Oh, Ollie won't die or anything," Perry remarked. "Are you going, Miss Lester? May I walk home with you?"

He took her parasol from her, and held it over her head carefully as they crossed the road. All the dogs followed them as a matter of course, and with them entered the cottage gate. Miss Carrie Dow was on duty that morning.

"Melinda, Melinda! quick!" she cried. Miss Melinda, however, refused to come. She was in the mysteries of her toilet, and her mouth was full of hairpins. As soon as she could speak she said, crossly,

"You needn't call me, Carrie, every time Miss Lester and Mrs. Tom Fanshawe go by, simpering up in some man's face. If you do, I'll wear out all my shoes trotting back and forth."

Mr. Perry returned to his cousin in a few minutes. "Why didn't you tell me that Miss Lester was a beautiful woman?" he said. "No wonder Ollie Floyd prefers her to his shooting-box. She doesn't say much, but she doesn't need to. By Jove!"

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"And is Mr. Floyd really ill?" Mrs. Fanshawe asked.

"Yes, and he is as surly as a bear. I fancy his matrimonial chains chafe him nowadays." Mr. Perry looked very wise. "Poor old Ollie," he murmured.

"Why didn't he get a divorce from that wife of his?" Mrs. Fanshawe said, energetically.

Mr. Perry shrugged his shoulders and spread his palms. "Oh, he was glad to rid himself of her in the easiest way. And I fancy he could not get a divorce, either, without going West, and that is a nasty, low thing to do. There is nothing the matter, you know, but incompatibility of temper."

"That is quite enough," Mrs. Fanshawe said, briskly. "He ought to have had a divorce long ago, and then he would be free to fall in love if he wanted to. I have no patience with him. And if Miss Lester should fall in love with him—" She broke off and looked at Mr. Perry.

"That would be a pretty kettle of fish," he added. "But, Harry, she is a beautiful woman, and the first time I saw her I thought she was a poor, pale, big-eyed invalid. She—"

"Oh, don't be so foolish," said Mrs. Fanshawe. "Try to live up to your bald head."

Carol wrote a note to the secretary of the tennis club, and accepted the proffered honor. The note despatched, she was haunted by the memory of an uncrossed t, but it did not seem to be seriously regarded, for Miss Vaughn called for her in a day or two, and bore her off to learn the new game.

It was a warm day, and after a few games had been

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played, Carol was glad to go into the Vaughn's dusky, shaded house. Mrs. Vaughn greeted her with as much warmth as she could muster, which was not overwhelming, for the stiff, prim little woman had disciplined herself to a sad propriety of demeanor that in Newbroek was considered the quintessence of elegant dignity. Her husband, a lion among men, was a mild-mannered creature in society. He had never quite overcome a vague fear of women, and this shyness he had bequeathed to his son, who colored up to the eyes when he shook hands with Carol. There was nothing new-fangled about the house. Like the Dearbornes', it was big and comfortable, but carpets and engravings had not given way to rugs and etchings. It had cost the Vaughns a pang to lunch at one and dine at six, but this was a point where Penelope's influence showed itself, and her parents had yielded to her wishes in the matter with something like shame. They felt that it was an innovation on time-honored customs, but they were comforted when they found that most of their friends followed their example.

Carol accepted an invitation to stay to luncheon, although she was a little awed by the house and its inmates. She wondered whether the family always conversed in an undertone, and always wore the same air of subdued contentment. Could Will Vaughn have ever been a roistering, noisy boy? Could Penelope have ever showed fight when, as a child, her nurse had asked her to go to bed? Mentally, she answered in the negative. They had sprung into the world in immaculate attire and with sedate manners.

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"And so you like Newbroek?" said Mrs. Vaughn. They had been talking of the beauty of the town, of the loveliness of the weather, of the excellence of the roads.

"Very much," Carol answered. She had answered this question a score of times in the past few weeks. "I feel really at home once more. Although I was five years in Berlin, it never seemed home to me."

"I am very glad to hear you thus express yourself," said Mr. Vaughn, folding his napkin neatly and slipping it into a heavy silver ring. "So many Americans become foreignized that I fear to take my family abroad lest they catch the infection. Many of our country people, after a temporary sojourn in Europe, become neither flesh, fish, nor fowl."

This was as near a joke as he ever ventured, and his wife and children smiled.

"We are of English descent," he continued, "and I have sometimes had a wish to visit the mother country. My grandfather lived in Derbyshire, but he was a man in a humble walk of life, and I fear that his cottage has been long ago swept away. Still, I should like well to visit England, and we may go some time. The Continent I have no desire to explore, although I dare say Penelope would drag me over to Paris to buy some of the far-famed toilets."

Carol could with difficulty repress a smile at the idea of Quakery Penelope decked out in French frippery.

"My old friend, John Dearborne," Mr. Vaughn continued, "made the grand tour late in life, and I always thought that the unwonted excitement indirectly brought on his sudden death. Him you never knew, Miss Lester. He was a king among men; I

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miss him every day." Here Mr. Vaughn's voice trembled. "His son Chauncey is like him in many ways, but he lacks his father's indomitable will and perseverance."

"Yes," young Vaughn said, with a smile, "we boys feel our inferiority."

Carol's heart warmed to the angular-featured old man, who sat with his head resting on his hand, his elbow propped on the table. There was a sad look on his brown, wrinkled face, and he passed his other hand wearily over his white hair. Suddenly he looked up.

"Waiting for me?" he exclaimed. "Daughter, you should not let me fall into dreams."

He smiled at her with yearning tenderness. He had been thinking of John Dearborne, and he knew that the time was fast coming when he, too, must leave those who had made life so sweet to him.

"Mr. Dearborne's death was a great shock to his friends," Mrs. Vaughn said, when her husband and son had left the room. She looked up, and saw the tears in Carol's eyes. "My dear," she added, gently, "I fear we have awakened sad memories. It was thoughtless of us."

Then remembering that the girl's father and mother were dead, she took Carol's hand and pressed it tenderly.

They were all kind and friendly to her, yet Carol was glad to escape from that silent, orderly, shaded house. The atmosphere oppressed her. She returned to the cottage, and the sight of Leila turning the library topsy-turvy was a positive relief.

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Chapter XII.

Chauncey stood before the oval mirror in the hall. He passed his fingers through his thick hair, re-arranged his necktie, and set his hat on his head. After a final glance at himself, he began slowly to draw on a pair of gloves. Outside his horses pawed the gravel, and the groom spoke soothing words to them. It was the first day of July, but the sun's rays were tempered by a cool south-west wind. The grass and trees were one deep shade of green. Flowers bloomed everywhere.

Mrs. Dearborne came down the stairs, and she paused with her hand on the bannister-railing and looked at her son. "Chauncey," she said. He turned, guiltily conscious of having just admired the set of his collar in the mirror. "Are you going to drive?" she added, after a portentous pause.

"I am going to drive," he replied.

"With Miss Lester?"

"With Miss Lester. Have you any objection?" He clasped his hands behind him and looked at her, a danger signal in his eyes.

"If I had, it would make no difference," she said, bitterly. "You are infatuated. I am glad your father did not live to see this day."

"Oh, it is a fine day; he would have enjoyed it;"

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and Chauncey, chuckling a little at his smart repartee, took his seat in his high, red-wheeled carriage and drove off.

Mrs. Dearborne drew a long sigh. She was a sincere woman, albeit a narrow one. Save for a year in Europe and an occasional week in New York, she had hardly stirred out of the town where she had been born and bred. She had the true provincial contempt for anything foreign, and now she saw her son led off by a strange woman who came from Heaven knew where. She could find nothing to admire in Carol, save a pretty face. Out of all the town, this rash girl had chosen Mrs. Fanshawe for a crony. She had deliberately selected the most fashionable church to worship in, and everybody knows that a pushing upstart always seeks the aid that is given by the religion of the rich. Mrs. Dearborne looked on the Episcopal Church with Dutch scorn, considering it the one affected by people who fain would be considered somebody. She had noticed that Methodists and Quakers, as they laid up worldly lucre, often forsook their unfashionable beliefs with their mid-day dinners, and adopted the Episcopal Church along with five-o'clock tea.

But deeper than her dislike of Carol Lester was her love for her son. She worshipped all her children, but Chauncey most devoutly, and her jealousy was equal to her passionate affection. She could not have accepted the most irreproachable Newbroek maiden as a daughter without a little pang, and yet she wanted Chauncey to marry. But not this strange girl who had bewitched him already. Not her! Mrs.

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Dearborne clasped her hands, and paced the long parlors. She was haunted by the words her daughter had spoken concerning Oliver Floyd. She had a vague fear of such men as he; she had dim notions of their vices; to her they seemed capable of almost any refined infamy. And the more she thought, the blacker grew her reflections. She was not a woman of vivid imagination, yet as she paced to and fro in the parlor, she wove a monstrous romance about the girl who at that moment was seated beside her son, no doubt seducing him by her smiles.

"Where shall we go?" Chauncey said.

"Let the horses choose," Carol answered. Naturally, they chose the road they oftenest travelled, and trotted briskly towards the River Farm.

"Take the reins," said Chauncey, when they reached the gates. He opened them, and then added as he seated himself beside her again, "I want to drive you to the brow of the hill. One of these days I am going to build a house there and turn hermit."

"A hermit?" He nodded, and she smiled in scorn. "You a hermit! By the time you are forty, you will be a gay young man; you will give a garden-party once a week, and fill your hermitage with five hundred dear friends."

"Perhaps," he said. "It is the unexpected that arrives."

There was a well-made road to the brow of the hill, and the horses trotted easily up the gentle slope.

"Now, where shall I put my house?" Chauncey said. "Here, or over on the knoll?" He leaned towards her, and waited eagerly for her reply.

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But she made a little grimace. "The monk must choose his own cell. It is nothing to the outside world."

"Of course," he exclaimed. He turned his horses, and sent them down the hill again. She glanced at him and smiled. His face was red, and his lips were pressed close together. She laid her hand on his coat-sleeve.

"Mr. Dearborne!" He looked at her without a word, and yet there was that in his eyes which forbade the jesting speech she was about to make. She shrank back a little, and they drove a long time in silence. Her heart beat quick; she was beginning to fear his moods; she wondered whether she understood them.

"Are you going to Mrs. Fanshawe's to dinner next week?" she said, striving to speak carelessly.

"Yes, if you are," he replied.

"I am going, of course. I like Mrs. Fanshawe. You told me once that people did not quite approve of her. I don't see why. She does nothing worse than ride on Sunday, and go to church afterwards."

"Ah, you do not know Newbroek," Chauncey said.

"It is a harmless little town; I like it. But it is funny. Everybody sighs and says Newbroek is *so* unsociable, *so* inhospitable, and yet everybody came to see us the first month we were here."

"How often have I told you that you were like no one else?" he said. "Newbroek never welcomed a stranger before. But frankly, I think a good many people called out of sheer curiosity."

"I am sure of it," Carol said, "and I have not re-

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turned their calls. Aunt Mil and I sent our cards. I suppose you called out of sheer curiosity, too?"

"Yes," he said. Then he looked down in her face and smiled. "I went to scoff and remained to pray."

"The gallant turned monk would be a good title for a novel," she said.

"Am I to turn monk?" he asked. "Do you condemn me to the cloister?"

"You condemn yourself."

He started. "What do you mean?" he said, quickly.

"Mean? Why, you told me that you were going to build yourself a hermitage, and live in it. There is a stone in 'Whitefoot's' hoof, Mr. Dearborne."

"No, there is not," he retorted; "but we will change the conversation if you like. Please do not beat about the bush. Speak out."

"I will speak out. You are rude, unmannerly, ungentlemanlike."

He lifted his hat. "Thank you; I shall remember those words, Miss Lester."

"Pray remember, too, that you ordered me not to beat about the bush," she retorted, panting with anger.

He looked at her. Her eyes were flashing, her cheeks flushed. "Miss Lester, I humbly beg your pardon," he said. "I own I was rude and unmannerly and ungentlemanlike. I am a boor. Will you drive? I shall walk home. I am not fit to sit beside you."

He gave her the reins and sprang out. She never looked at him, but she spoke to the horses and they

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trotted off. Chauncey looked at the fast receding carriage for a minute, and as soon as it was out of sight, he sat down on a stone wall and lighted a cigar. He chuckled; he knew she would soon pull up and wait for him. Presently a farmer came jogging by.

"Will you give me a lift to town?" Chauncey said.

The farmer stopped his bony nag. "You are John Dearborne's son, ain't you?" he asked, looking at the young man critically.

"I have that honor," Chauncey replied.

"Whoa, Polly. Well, it is an honor. I knowed your father. Git in. I ain't going straight to town, got to go and see a man on the Cedar Road, but I'll git you inter Newbroek before dark. I knowed you the minute I set eyes on you. You look a sight like your father. Him and me worked together in Bowen's machine-shop, but he took to money, and I took to farming. It's the way o' the world. G'lang, Polly."

Carol, meanwhile, drove on until her anger was burned out. Then she stopped, and waited for ten minutes; she thought it was an hour. Finally she turned; she went back to the farm, and asked the farmer's wife if Mr. Dearborne were there?

No, she hadn't seed nothing of him since he drove off. She looked at her questioner in amazement, and it was not pleasant, so Carol sent the horses on again towards town. Once or twice she stopped, and called; she was sure that he was hiding behind a stone wall, gloating over her misery. What should she do? Everybody would see her alone in Chauncey Dearborne's well-known red-wheeled carriage. On

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the highway she passed Doctor Silloway, who bowed and stared and smiled. She passed Mr. Thorpe and his wife; they bowed and stared and smiled. She passed Mrs. Mott and Mrs. Huyler, who were luxuriating in a hired phaeton; they bowed and stared and smiled. And, finally, she met Mrs. Dearborne, driving out in her low-swung Victoria; she stared and bowed, but did not smile. After that, Carol saw no one; she was conscious of more bows and smiles and stares, but at last she was safe within her own gates.

"Mercy, miss!" cried James. "Where on earth is Mr. Dearborne?"

"I don't know, and I don't care," she answered. "Drive the horses over to his stable." Then she rushed to her own room, and burst into a storm of tears.

Chauncey, after learning a good deal about his father's early days from the garrulous old farmer, reached home at six o'clock, and went out to the stable, where he found his horses. The coachman and groom eyed him curiously, for they and James had talked the matter over, and concluded that Mr. Chauncey and Miss Lester must have had a bad falling out. But Mr. Chauncey did not look woe-begone.

"Miss Lester is a good driver," he said, as he left the stable.

He dressed hastily, and took his place at the dinner-table opposite his mother, who was grave and taciturn, and when they were alone she said,

"Chauncey, have you given your horses to Miss Lester?"

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He laughed. "Why, mother, you are growing facetious. No, the horses are still mine. It is only my heart that is gone."

"You needn't joke," said Mrs. Dearborne. "I met Miss Lester alone driving your horses up the river road. Where were you? It was scandalous. Everybody saw her."

"Then they saw a handsome woman driving a pair of handsome horses," he rejoined. "I rode home with an old farmer, who knew my father. It was all nonsense, mother, and it was all my fault. I must go and apologize to Miss Lester this evening."

"I would go now, if I were you," Mrs. Dearborne said, satirically, and he took her advice, for he drank off his coffee and walked to the cottage at once. He made so humble an apology that Carol must needs accept it; but she would not drive with him after that for a week.

They chanced one evening to meet at Mrs. Fanshawe's, or rather Carol went to Mrs. Fanshawe's and Chauncey followed her there in the course of ten or fifteen minutes.

"You are doomed," Mr. Fanshawe said. "My wife has disposed of you, Dearborne."

"Because you don't want to go, Tom," said his wife, "it does not follow that Mr. Dearborne does not." Then, turning to Chauncey, she continued, "I want Miss Lester to see Ossining Lake—"

"Of course; she must see Ossining Lake," said Chauncey. "I will drive you there, Miss Lester, any day."

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"And me, too?" murmured Mrs. Fanshawe, mimicking a child.

"And you, too; and we ought to have a fourth."

Whereupon Mr. Fanshawe stood up, and declared that he would not be the fourth; he hated long drives; he hated all manner of excursions; he hated Ossining Lake.

"There is nothing to do after you get there," he said. "You have a bad dinner at the hotel, and you go and look at the view from sixteen different summer-houses, each one perched on a rock fifty feet high and as smooth as a pane of glass. You scramble, you fret, you get heated, and if you are a man you say wicked words, and if you are a woman you think wickeder ones. Ossining Lake! Miss Lester, don't you let my wife drag you over to the wretched place—"

"And when shall we go?" said Chauncey, cutting short his host's eloquence.

"Next week," Mrs. Fanshawe answered. "My cousin Theodore will be here then."

"Poor Teddy!" groaned Mr. Fanshawe. "Poor Teddy!"

They paid no attention to him, but went on talking about Ossining Lake all the evening. Chauncey went home with Carol as a matter of course, and, as a matter of course, lingered a little while with her on the cottage porch.

His mother sat up for him. Hitherto, when he had come home late, he had found the house in darkness, save for the lights in the hall; but now there was always a light in his mother's bedroom, and to-

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night she sat by the table reading the Bible. It irritated him, and yet it made him feel like a brute. He passed by her open door, and she did not speak to him or even raise her head. When he was safe in his room she prepared for bed; but she could not lie down at night while she knew he was still under the baleful spell of a strange woman's winsome face. There was hope for him only when he was beneath the Dearborne roof. At least so Mrs. Dearborne thought, being not at all a shrewd, clever woman, but merely a very loving and very jealous mother, who could have laid down her life for her son, but could not share his affection with another, or believe that other worthy of so great a boon.

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Chapter XIII.

It had been a hot day in New York, but at sundown a cool breath of air stole up from the sea and swept over the panting town. Floyd sat in his library, trying to write a letter. The table was covered with sheets of paper all scribbled over, and he took up one sheet after another and tore them carefully before he dropped them into the waste-paper basket at his side.

"Good heavens!" he groaned, "how is a man to write and ask a woman if she knows he is married! She will think I am warning her not to fall in love with me."

He smiled at his own folly, and as he smiled he caught sight of his face reflected in a mirror. Was he so old as that? Were there such deep wrinkles around his eyes? He seized the last note he had written, and crushed it in his hand fiercely; then opened a little drawer of the table and took therefrom a faded photograph. It was the picture of a sweet child-face, but he looked at it with hard, unloving eyes. The photograph was of his wife; she had given it to him when he was wooing her, and he could not have told why he had kept it all these years. The love he had once had for her was long ago destroyed. She had dealt him no cruel blow; that might have been forgotten. But she had poi-

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soned his life; she had, by her deceit, her hypocrisy, her cunning, cut the ground away from beneath his feet, and left him helpless. Only with years had come a knowledge of her character. He had waited and hoped, until slowly the truth was borne upon him that she was false to the very core, that she was steeped in lies, that she could wind her arms about him, pleading for his pardon, and as she pleaded laugh at him for believing her. He had at last learned that, despite her words, despite the tender letters she sometimes wrote, she would never submit to his rule and be his wife indeed as long as he was willing to send her those comforting remittances. It stung him to think how she had outwitted him. She was an injured wife; he was a brute who had driven a gentle woman back to the maternal nest.

He tore the photograph into tiny fragments, and tossed them aside with a smile of self-scorn, for she was still triumphant. She could hold him by the throat, and say to all the world that he belonged to her. He was bound down hand and foot, as Gulliver was bound by the pygmies, with packthread. The thought galled him. He lifted his arms slowly, as though he felt the cords chafing his wrists at this moment, and he rose to his feet with a stifled cry; then brought his clinched hand down on the table in helpless rage.

"May I come in?" said a voice at the door, and Perry entered, shaven and shorn, cool, suave, and smiling.

"I thought you were in Newbroek," said Floyd.

"I am going in the eight-o'clock train. You are

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off for Babylon to-night, are you not? Gay party there. Fletcher has gone down, and Jim Beneway and a lot more. Somers generally asks a lively crowd when he asks anybody."

"Going to Somers's means an idiotic lot of eating and an idiotic lot of drinking," said Floyd.

"Then you are idiotically happy," Perry remarked.

Floyd drew down his mouth. "I don't know what in thunder to do with myself. I have half a mind to shut up shop and go to California. There's a fellow in my office who is the happiest man in Christendom," he continued. "He gets two thousand dollars a year, and lives over in Jersey. He has a house about as big as a bandbox, and he has a wife and two or three tow-headed youngsters. He is an elder in the church. He never drinks, never gambles, never has any ups and downs, and he is as smug and self-satisfied as a policeman. I wanted to kill him to-day. Upon my word, he is so cool that his collar doesn't wilt no matter how high the mercury may kick, and it beat a ballet dancer this noon. Now a man like that is to be envied."

"You're down pretty low, Ollie," said Perry. "You are all out of gear. Somers will straighten you in twenty-four hours."

"Somers is the worst fool I know, and I know all the fools in New York," Floyd retorted. "Halloo, there is a letter I didn't see. I wish people wouldn't write to me all the time."

He glanced at the address and raised his eyebrows.

"That is from a woman," said Perry.

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"What makes you think so?"

"Oh, because you look so asinine. The conflict between a scowl and smile on your countenance was simply beautiful. Read your billet-doux."

Mr. Perry rose, and walked towards the dining-room. Without turning, he added, carelessly,

"By-the-way, I dare say I shall see Miss Lester in Newbroek. She and my cousin are great friends. Any message?"

"None," Floyd answered. He held a letter from Carol in his hand, and he smiled as he tore open the envelope.

"NEWBROEK, *July* 8, 1880.

"DEAR MR. FLOYD,—You have been ill, and it is our fault. If you had gone on your vacation last spring, instead of worrying yourself about our affairs, you would not have suffered from overwork. Let my aunt and me make some reparation. Come and spend a fortnight or a month at the cottage, and find out how agreeable it is to be lazy. We shall be at home all summer, and the invitation holds good for six months. Only telegraph us when you will come, so that we may kill the fatted calf. That does not mean that you are a prodigal. It means that we shall be as glad to see you as though you were a prodigal. Your friend, CAROL LESTER."

He replaced the letter in the envelope, and followed Perry into the dining-room.

"So your cousin and Miss Lester are friends," he said, cheerfully.

"Oh yes. Harry—that is, Mrs. Fanshawe—quite raves over her. Last time I was there I told Miss Lester that you had been ill. She looked as though she had given you a dose of laudanum herself, and was sorry for it. Dearborne is in love with her, I believe."

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"That boy!" said Floyd, contemptuously.

"'That boy' is good-looking and has a pocketful of money."

"He hasn't a penny in the world," Floyd rejoined. "He lives on his mother, as I happen to know. The widow got the fortune."

Perry whistled. "That must be disagreeable. Still, I suppose, Chauncey is used to it. She probably gives him a fat allowance. But he isn't his own master. Suppose he should do something she didn't like?"

"She would stop his pocket-money," Floyd said, with a sneer. "Then he would be in a pretty box. 'Gad, I don't envy him. Living on his mother—subject to an old woman's whims and fancies! By George, I would rather carry bricks."

"Oh no, you wouldn't, not if you had been brought up as the Dearborne boys were," said Perry.

They sat down, and ate sparingly of the food put before them, and then Perry jumped into a cab and was driven to the station. It was half-past ten o'clock when he reached his cousin's house.

"You are booked for an excursion to-morrow," Mrs. Fanshawe said. "We are going to drive over to Ossining Lake."

"Who is we?" he asked.

"We is you and I, and Miss Lester and Mr. Dearborne. Tom refuses to go."

"Catch me," said Mr. Fanshawe. "You will have a hot drive, a bad dinner, and a headache. I would rather stay at home and make baking-powder."

He chuckled, and stretched out his short, fat legs. "If you children must gallivant, gallivant and be—"

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"Tom!" cried his wife, warningly.

"And be happy, be happy, my dear. Don't suspect me of any worse wish. And I am going to bed. Hot in town to-day, Ted?"

"Hot as—"

"Ted!" cried Mrs. Fanshawe.

"Hot as — as — as — oh, well never mind how hot!"

Mr. Fanshawe laughed, and went off to bed, leaving his wife and her cousin to talk together on the cool piazza.

"Who is that?" Perry asked, as a dark figure glided over the lawn on the other side of the road.

"That is Chauncey Dearborne. He has been at Miss Lester's. He is always there."

"Floyd told me that old Dearborne left all his money to his wife. Is that so?"

"Yes, that is so. The boys were disposed to make trouble about it, but Mrs. Dearborne managed to pacify them. She gives them an allowance. I should not like to be dependent on her. She is a terrible woman; she is the only human being I am afraid of in the world."

"Then she must be terrible," Perry said. "And what would she say to Miss Lester as a daughter-in-law?"

"Oh, I don't know. But nobody could be good enough for her Chauncey. She thinks him perfection. Ted?"

"Well?"

"Is Oliver Floyd a gambler, a drunkard, and a libertine?"

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"Good heavens, what a question! He is the best fellow that ever lived. Are you crazy, Harry?"

"No, but that is what they call Mr. Floyd here in Newbroek. Somebody has set the stories going. They hurt Miss Lester."

Perry rose with a smothered exclamation. "That poor little woman! Who set the stories going?"

"Nobody knows, but they are afloat. And the worst is, Miss Lester snubbed some busybodies who asked her too many questions. She told me about it herself; she could not understand why any one should care to know the reason she came to Newbroek, or what Mr. Floyd had to do with it. She has a little temper, and she treated one or two women as they deserved. It was very impolitic. But she does not dream what things are whispered about her. Still, she has made some warm friends, and perhaps the stories will die out soon. I hope so."

"If Floyd suspected that his coming here hurt Miss Lester, he would stay away," said Perry. "Of course, when Ollie was a young fellow, he cut a few didoes, but it is his wife who has made the mischief. She poses for a broken-hearted woman, and as she is very pretty, she fools lots of people. I know her; she is a pink-and-white demon—the sort that throws carving-knives and dinner-plates. My man's wife was a maid of hers once, and so I happened to find out. She whacked the maid with a hand-glass one day, and naturally the girl left. That's Mrs. Floyd."

"I wish she would die, and then he could marry Miss Lester."

"Don't delude yourself," said Perry. "Floyd's

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private opinion is that all pretty women chuck dinner-plates promiscuously. He doesn't say much, but I know what he thinks. He admires Miss Lester, and yet he is quite willing she should remain Miss Lester so far as he goes."

Mrs. Fanshawe laughed. "Ted, you are as wise as Solomon, but I have no faith in your wisdom. If we are going over to the lake to-morrow, we had better go to bed now. It is past eleven. I hope it won't be as hot to-morrow as—as—as—"

"There, don't struggle," said Perry. "Similes don't run in the family."

At midnight there was a clap of thunder and a flash of lightning, and the rain drove down vehemently for an hour, but the next morning dawned clear and cool. Chauncey ate a solitary breakfast, for his mother was in New York, and at half-past nine he drove to the cottage for Carol, and then picked up Mrs. Fanshawe and Perry. Ossining Lake lay on the other side of the river, and the road most of the way was steep and densely wooded. Chauncey drove his mother's carriage horses, for one of his own pair was in no condition to stand the long pull up the mountain, and the powerful team drew the light wagon as though it were a child's toy. When the lake was reached it was time for the mid-day dinner, and Mrs. Fanshawe led the way towards the dining-room.

"Tom prophesied that we should get nothing to eat," she said, "but I don't believe we shall starve."

"People who come to a summer hotel like this generally do live on view," said Chauncey.

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"Miss Lester, did you ever dine at Oliver Floyd's?" Mr. Perry asked.

She looked at him in displeasure. "No, I never did."

"You ought to," he continued, "for Ollie has the best cook in New York. Poor old Ollie; he is as blue as a June sky."

"Hear! hear!" said Mrs. Fanshawe. "Teddy, you are waxing poetical."

"How can I help it, under these circumstances?" he returned, gallantly. "Poor old Ollie!" he repeated. "I was in his room last evening, and he found the world wretchedly out of joint until he discovered a letter on his desk. Whom the letter was from, I do not know, but the old boy's face was wreathed in smiles as he read it."

Carol colored, but Chauncey, who was not looking at her, raised his eyebrows and smiled significantly.

"Even poor old Ollie, as you call him, may find life not such a grind," he remarked. "From all I hear, he enjoys himself very well."

"All sham," said Perry. "He is a gay deceiver—I mean that he is not the jovial fellow he looks."

After dinner Chauncey led Carol off to see the sixteen summer-houses, but she said she would explore no more when they reached the one called "Cloud Parlor," a sturdy rustic structure clinging to the side of a cliff. Below lay the tiny lake, hemmed in by gray rocks that were mirrored in the smooth sheet of water. The woods sloped away on all sides until the mass of green melted in the blue of the sky.

"It is like a bit of Switzerland," she said. She

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stood grasping the railing lightly and looking down at the lake.

"Then you cannot agree with Mr. Fanshawe?" Chauncey said.

"I am afraid I never could agree with Mr. Fanshawe," she answered. "He cares for nothing but his dinner."

"Do you know you are speaking most irreverently of a man you ought to honor," said Chauncey. "He has made a great deal of money out of baking-powder, and therefore he is to be respected."

"You think of nothing but money-making," she retorted.

"Do you mean me? You surely cannot, for I never thought of making money. I know perfectly well I have no genius for it, and I am thankful that I am not obliged to elbow my way through the world. It is a necessity that every man makes a virtue of. To hear Tom Fanshawe talk one would suppose that it was a most noble thing to be born poor and by dint of labor to grow rich. I cannot see that the process is an elevating one in most instances. My father made his own money, yet he did not wish me to try to make more. But my father was an exception."

"You are very proud of him," Carol said, softly.

"Yes; he was a man no one could know and not honor and love. He used to talk to me about my future; he was very ambitious for me; I was to do all that he had wished to do when he was young—Still, you do not care to hear me talk about myself in this way. I am very egotistical, but it is your fault. You listen as no one else ever listens."

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"Go on," she said. "What was your father's ambition for you?"

"He was very generous; he found out what my ambition was and he made it his own. We built a castle in Spain. Shall I tell you about it?"

"I wish you would," she answered.

She seated herself, and he took a place beside her.

"Well, first of all, I meant to live down on the farm—you know where; I showed you the site of my castle."

"Of your hermitage," she said.

"No, not unless you insist that it be a hermitage. A home was what I was thinking of, and a home means a great deal."

He broke off, and looked at her, but she did not glance towards him.

"And your ambition?" she asked.

"I want to study. I dare say you will laugh; but do you see that spider spinning his web yonder? I could watch that spider all day; he has a fascination for me; I want to know what he proposes to do when he gets his web spun."

"Sit in it, and wait for unhappy flies," said Carol.

"But the spider is only an illustration," he continued. "What would be the result of my studies I hardly know; but if a man watches and observes he learns, and when he learns he must tell the world of it. Ah, I am talking lightly to you, Miss Lester; you smile, and no wonder. I read a book the other day by one of the greatest men of our time. It was about earth-worms; Darwin wrote it; and I would

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rather have written that book than have painted one of Raphael's Madonnas."

"And what did your father think?" Carol asked.

"I inherit my bent from him. He had very little schooling, but he taught himself a good deal. He knew every bird's whistle, he recognized a tree when it was bare of leaves, and I can assure you, Miss Lester, that few men are able to do it. He pretended that he was fond of going fishing, but he really cared only to be in the woods—'to watch things growing,' as he used to say. He had always a hobby; sometimes it was to collect specimens of all the ferns found in one county, again to study mosses through a microscope. Well, I am like him in all that, and I am glad of it."

Carol laughed—his praise of his father touched her.

"I see you in my mind's eye," she said. "You will be a venerable professor; you will write fat books full of pictures of skeleton leaves. Oh, I can see you, indeed, with a velvet skull-cap on your bald head, shuffling about in loose slippers, and peering through gold-bowed spectacles at all manner of creeping, crawling creatures. Ugh!" and she gave a little shudder. Then she turned to him frankly. "Mr. Dearborne," she added, gravely, "I know that we shall be very proud of you some day."

"We?" he repeated.

"Yes; we, your friends. Am I not one? or am I so new an acquaintance that I must not claim a place among your friends?"

"Shall I tell you the place you hold already?" he said, quickly.

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She looked at him; she understood him, and he saw that she did.

"Shall I tell you?" he added.

"No," she answered, but it was with a smile. She rose. "Come. We must go and look up Mrs. Fanshawe."

"I have not much patience," he said. "Still, you hardly know me yet— Ah, let us stay here a little longer."

She stepped out of the summer-house, and he said no more as they went down the winding path towards the hotel, where they found Mrs. Fanshawe and Perry seated on the piazza, vibrating to and fro in great willow rocking-chairs.

"If the sixteen summer-houses have been visited, it is time to drive home," Mrs. Fanshawe said, with a shrewd glance at Chauncey. He looked at his watch.

"Yes, it is time," he said, and went off towards the stables to order the horses.

A cloud stole over the sun, the breeze ruffled the waters of the lake, and a petulant summer shower came up suddenly. Chauncey took refuge on the piazza and waited for the shower to stop; but it stopped only to be followed by another longer one, and presently the rain came down steadily.

"It is going to be a regular old-fashioned pour," said the landlord, when his opinion was asked. "I guess you had better make up your minds to stay all night. You can telegraph to your folks that you will be down in the morning."

Mrs. Fanshawe looked at Carol, then glanced at Chauncey, who nodded intelligently.

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"Shall I wire to Tom?" Mr. Perry asked his cousin.

"No," she answered. She led Carol into the deserted parlor.

"My dear, we can't stay," she said. "Tom would not blame me, but you—"

"Would he blame me?" Carol returned. "Oh, let us stay. We can telegraph, and I don't fancy the idea of going down that road in the rain."

Mrs. Fanshawe bit her lip. "People will talk."

"And pray, what do we care for their talk?"

"Ah, but if you don't care, Chauncey Dearborne cares for you," said Mrs. Fanshawe.

Then the bell rang for supper, and they went into the dining-room. Perry was in gay spirits.

"I am glad we are storm-stayed," he said. "We can have a private parlor and play whist, eh, Chaunce?"

But Chauncey frowned. "We ought to go home," he said. "The ferry stops running at eight o'clock," he added, after a moment's reflection, "and it is past six now. I do not know exactly how we can get across the river."

"Let's wait here till the Hudson freezes," was Perry's jaunty suggestion, and Chauncey darted a contemptuous glance towards him.

"Oh, you can persuade the ferry-master to take us across," broke in Mrs. Fanshawe, with all a woman's faith in man's power, even over the servants of a corporation. "And we cannot stay here, Mr. Dearborne," she added.

"Of course we cannot," he echoed.

"You are mad—mad as April hares," Perry ex-

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claimed; "and April hares are a degree madder than March hares."

"Must we go?" said Carol to Chauncey. His face was troubled, but he smiled when she spoke to him.

"Yes," he answered, "I think we must. For various reasons."

"Even if we swim the Hudson?" Perry added, satirically.

"Even if we swim the Hudson," Chauncey echoed, as he rose from the table.

Perry protested, the landlord shook his head, but Chauncey's mind was made up, and though the rain was falling and darkness had set in, he ordered the horses to be harnessed. He borrowed a covered wagon, and a lighted lantern was hung on the dash-board.

"It is a great responsibility," the landlord said, as he helped the ladies into the wagon. "I wouldn't drive down that road to-night for fifty dollars—no, sir."

"You haven't been asked to," said Chauncey. "Come, Ted," he added, peremptorily, and Perry took his place, still vowing that he would stay at the hotel.

"If we ever get down alive!" said Mrs. Fanshawe, piteously.

"I thought you were a brave woman," cried Chauncey. "Are you afraid, Miss Lester? or have you a few grains of faith in me?"

"I have faith," she answered.

He gathered up the reins, and spoke to his horses. He was glad he did not have his own nervous, high-spirited bays to-night, for they were afraid of their own shadows after dark. The rays of the lantern

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could hardly penetrate the murky gloom, and the horses were allowed to pick their own way cautiously and slowly; but the lights of the ferry village shone out at last, and beyond the wide, black river rose up Newbroek.

"We are almost home," said Chauncey, "and we are not dead."

"Only sleeping," added the irreverent matron, who had been nodding a little now and then.

"We might just as well have stopped at the hotel," growled Perry.

"You are not so chivalric as Mr. Dearborne," Mrs. Fanshawe said; "you think only of yourself, Teddy."

"And is it chivalric to drag ladies out in the teeth of a storm?" he retorted.

"Here, take the reins," said Chauncey, shortly. "I will go and get the ferry-master."

He was gone a long time, and came back with a man who carried a lantern, which he raised, disclosing a wrinkled, white-bearded face. He peered into the carriage curiously.

"Why, how de do, Mrs. Fanshawe," he said. "Kinder sad comin' home this way."

"Very sad, indeed, Captain Hasbrouck. Are you going to run the ferry for us?"

He chuckled. "Well, hardly. I am goin' to row you over. My son will take care of the horses. It ain't rainin' now. It ain't rained much here anyhow. My boat is as dry as a bone, and I have got it all fixed for you."

Guided by the old man with the lantern, they went to the wharf and stepped into a roomy gig. Chaun-

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cey took one pair of oars, Captain Hasbrouck the other, while Perry acted as coxswain. The lantern was set in the prow, and the boat shot out through the inky water. The darkness seemed opaque. Mrs. Fanshawe clutched Carol's hand when a great river steamer loomed up suddenly, and passed by, leaving the row-boat to be tossed in the wake. From Newbroek came the sound of the town clock, and they all counted the slow strokes.

"Midnight," said Chauncey.

"Here we be!" sang out Captain Hasbrouck a minute later. The gig glided up to the wharf, and a sleepy night-watchman made fast the line, glad of the unexpected diversion.

Chauncey hastened to the nearest livery-stable, where he was so lucky as to find a carriage about to start for an evening party, but a silver dollar induced the coachman to convey the belated excursionists home first. Mrs. Milinowski welcomed Carol with sleepy severity, but Mr. Fanshawe greeted his wife and cousin with joy and iced claret. Chauncey dismissed the carriage and walked home. He saw a ray of light in his mother's bedroom window, and at the sight he lifted his eyebrows and whistled; then felt in his pocket for his latch-key.

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Chapter XIV.

There was a dim light in the lower hall, which Chauncey turned off before he went softly up the stairs. His mother heard him, and asked him to enter her room. She sat there in her travelling dress, and on the table before her lay an open Bible and her old-fashioned watch.

"Where have you been, Chauncey?" she asked, taking off her spectacles and looking at him coldly.

He answered her question, told her what a delightful day they had had until the showers came up, and strove to make his description vivid and picturesque.

"The ferry was not running," he said, "so I had to leave the horses on the other side of the river; but I was careful to see that they were in good hands. Patrick will get them early in the morning."

"You drove my horses," she said.

"Yes, but I will drive my own after this, if you object to my taking yours."

She smiled a little. "Which are yours?"

"None of them," he exclaimed, "although you have kindly allowed me to imagine that I owned two or three. The horses are yours, this house is yours, everything is yours, but I shall do as I please, and I will not be cross-questioned. I am not a boy."

"If you were a man, perhaps you would not be so blind," she said, bitterly. "You are a boy, Chaun-

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cey, and you are infatuated. That girl has bewitched you. How she and her bosom friend, Mr. Floyd, must laugh at you! Don't you see what a ridiculous figure you cut? Have you lost your reason?"

Chauncey was white to the lips, and he could not trust himself to speak.

"Tell her the truth," Mrs. Dearborne continued. "Tell her that you have no money, except as I give it to you; and tell her that I will never give you a penny if the penny is for her. Then see how she will treat you. She will not be so eager for you to teach her to ride, and to instruct her in literature. She has made you think that you are a prodigy of learning; she has flattered you off your feet. Chauncey, I am ashamed that a son of mine should be so pitifully weak."

He rose and walked towards the door. "And I am ashamed of you," he said. "But," and now he turned on her angrily, "don't suppose for a minute that what you may say will influence me. I will do as I please. You can stop my allowance; stop it whenever you like."

He put his hands in his pockets, and looked at her from head to foot.

"You are talking wildly," she said. "To-morrow, perhaps you will be rational." And then Chauncey left the room.

Mrs. Dearborne undressed and went to bed, but she could not sleep, for she heard her son pacing to and fro in the next room. She had said more than she intended, and her heart smote her. Still he paced to and fro, and she lay and listened until she could

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bear it no longer. She sprang out of bed, threw on a wrapper, and crept to his door. She listened, and the footsteps ceased. Vague fears took possession of her; her knees shook, and with a trembling hand she turned the knob and entered the room. Chauncey lay on the sofa. He had not undressed, and in his hand he held a cigar that he had lighted and let go out.

"What do you want now?" he said, without stirring. "I am in no humor to listen to you, mother; I have heard enough for one night. Sit down," he added more gently as he noticed her pale, drawn face.

"I am afraid I said too much," she murmured. She longed to stretch out her arms to her son, her best loved child, but custom lay upon her

"Heavy as frost and deep almost as life."

She had never caressed her children, and now she dared not be tender. "I want you to remember that everything I have is yours," she went on. "Only I ask one favor, Chauncey."

"Well?" he said.

"Do you mean to marry Miss Lester?"

He reflected a minute before he answered.

"Yes," he said, at last. "I mean to ask her; but I shall tell her my position in the world; I will not sail under false colors."

"The favor, Chauncey, is that you will not ask her yet for a year," Mrs. Dearborne said, earnestly. "You hardly know her yet. Wait a year."

He shook his head and smiled. His anger was fast vanishing.

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"I can't promise that, mother."

"Why not?"

"Because I am confident I should break the promise, unless I ran away."

"Then run away," Mrs. Dearborne cried. "Go to Europe, and when you come back, if you think as you do now—"

Again he shook his head. "Le monde n'est jamais divisé pour moi, qu'en deux régions: celle où elle est, et celle où elle n'est pas."

"What does that mean?" she said, blankly.

"It means that I am going to stay here. Mother, don't let us talk about this any more. I wish you would try to know her better, for if you knew her you would not be so opposed to her."

"Do you really love her?" she asked, looking up at him.

"Better than all the world," he answered, cruelly.

Mrs. Dearborne drew a quick breath, then sighed. "I want you to be happy, Chauncey, and it is not much I ask. Wait until you know her better. Why, three months ago she did not exist for you."

"And until three months ago I had only existed," he said. "Mother, you loved my father; you married him against the wishes of all your family; your own mother would not go to the wedding; and yet—and yet you married my father." He laughed, and put his arm about her. "There is some of your blood in my veins; you must not blame me for being headstrong."

"No one could say a word against your father," she exclaimed. "He was only poor, and belonged to

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an obscure family. But this girl— Who knows anything about her, except that she was brought here by a man whose dissolute life has made him gray before he is forty? He is her friend and adviser, and decent women will not let him cross their thresholds. Oh, Chauncey, Chauncey, am I unreasonable in asking you to wait?"

There were tears in her eyes, and she clasped his arm with passionate anxiety.

"You are not unreasonable, perhaps," he said, gently, "but I can make no promises. And after all, I have no reason to suppose that she will accept me. Why should she? She may please you, mother, and send me away."

Mrs. Dearborne looked up at him with an incredulous smile, and it was so flattering that he laughed rather foolishly.

"You think me irresistible, don't you?" he said. "I hope she will think so, too; but she—she—oh, she will never marry me in the world! I am crazy to imagine such a thing. Go to your room, mother. See, the daylight is coming."

The birds were beginning to chirp as Chauncey relighted his cigar. He was too excited to try to sleep. He lighted cigar after cigar, and threw each away half smoked. He paced the floor, and at last, as the sun's rays beat bright against the window, he flung himself on the sofa, and fell into troubled sleep.

Like a woman of principle, Mrs. Dearborne breakfasted the next morning at her usual hour. She had given her orders to the cook, and was about to read the paper when Mr. Vaughn was shown into the li-

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brary. He looked care-worn, and replied absently to her questions about his own and his family's welfare.

"I came on business," he said, at last. "It is about John's will. I have made a bad blunder; I am an old man, and I ought to stay at home in the chimney-corner and let younger hands hold the reins."

He spoke peevishly, and brushed back his bristling hair with an impatient gesture.

"What is it?" Mrs. Dearborne asked. "Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Serious for me. Every man in town will laugh, and say that I am an old fool, and that I ought either to die or quit work. It isn't easy to quit work. I have worked hard for nearly sixty years, and how can I sit down and twirl my thumbs."

He glared at Mrs. Dearborne fiercely, but his expression changed and his voice quavered as he continued.

"A rusty blade! a rusty blade! It will be put in the sheath soon. Poor John! He died in the bloom of health. It is better so, Mrs. Dearborne. I shall linger on, a useless, childish old man, and when I die it will be a relief to everybody. They will pull long faces, and say that I had passed the three-score-and-ten—'it was time he went, poor old fellow.' But I think my daughter will be sorry, don't you?"

He leaned towards Mrs. Dearborne with pitiful earnestness.

"We shall all be sorry," she said.

He shook his head, and sat lost in thought.

"I came to see you on business," he said, present-

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ly, in his customary formal way. "I regret to inform you that your husband's will is not quite sound. It was drawn up nearly a year before Chauncey was born. Therefore, while it is binding as regards the two elder children, as regards him it is null and void. According to the Revised Statutes"—here he drew a slip of paper out of his pocket, and put on his spectacles. He chanced to glance at Mrs. Dearborne. "There, there," he said, soothingly, "it will not make much difference to you, even if Chauncey acts ugly. You will still be one of the richest women in the State. But Chauncey won't act ugly. Well, according to the Revised Statutes, 'Whenever a testator shall have a child born after the making of a last will'—um, um; no need to read that. Oh yes—'every such child shall succeed to the same portion of such parent's real and personal estate as would have descended or been distributed to such child if such parent had died intestate, and shall be entitled to recover the same portion from the devisees or legatees.' Well, that's enough. I thought I knew Chauncey's age to a day, and I was mistaken."

"But what is to be done?" Mrs. Dearborne said, in a husky voice.

"Done? That depends on Chauncey. It is not a year yet since the will was admitted to probate. It would be easy for him to set the whole thing aside. He could find out how to do that, and there are plenty of lawyers to help him."

"Now, after everything has been settled?" said Mrs. Dearborne.

Mr. Vaughn nodded. "Yes, he could get his por-

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tion—there is no doubt of that. You would have no case, Mrs. Dearborne."

She sat silent, her eyes cast down.

"I thought at first that I would tell Chauncey," Mr. Vaughn continued, "but you had better tell him, and then send him to me to talk it over. I dare say he will sign off all his claims, for he knows very well that he can have everything he wants now, just as matters stand. He is a good fellow; he won't torment you. But, still, young men do sometimes like to feel themselves masters of a little money, and in case Chauncey gets that notion in his head, you could give him the farm and a couple of hundred thousand dollars; then deduct that from his portion when you make your will. You must make a new will at once. I know, and you know, that Chauncey won't grasp at all that the law will give him, regardless of you and his brother and sister."

"And I must tell him?" said Mrs. Dearborne.

"At once, or I will tell him, if you prefer. We must not deceive him. If he got angry, there would be a terrible mess, and I could not blame him for getting angry if we did deceive him. I hope he will never mention this matter, for my sake. I am an old man; I forget everything, and I don't want to be made the butt of all the lawyers in town."

His voice was growing querulous again. He stayed with Mrs. Dearborne nearly an hour, repeating the facts he had already told her, and bewailing his treacherous memory. She could hardly be brought to believe the truth; it stunned her, and Mr. Vaughn in vain assured her that Chauncey and she could arrange

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the matter amicably that very morning if they chose. It was for Chauncey to decide, and had he not always been all that a mother could wish a son to be? If it were Lawrence, she would have good reason to be alarmed, but Chauncey would never act greedily.

After Mr. Vaughn had gone, she sat motionless for a long time, wondering how Chauncey would receive this news. Would he be amiable, and content himself with a modest sum? Or would he clutch at all he could get, and then lay his treasure at his sweetheart's feet? "If it were not for the girl," thought Mrs. Dearborne, bitterly, "he would be mild and generous, but for that girl's sake he would rob his own mother."

Chauncey came sauntering in. He was tired, and his head ached.

"I want to talk to you," said Mrs. Dearborne.

"I can't talk this morning," he exclaimed; "at least, not on unpleasant subjects. What is the use of talking about them? It only makes me angry. What did Mr. Vaughn want so early in the morning?"

"He came on business."

"What business?" Chauncey picked up the paper, and looked at his mother over the top.

"Business connected with the estate," she answered, coldly.

"Humph. I suppose you mean me to understand that it does not concern me." He folded the paper impatiently, and skimmed a column with a deepening frown. A servant came in, and handed him a note which he read and smiled over, and tossed into his mother's lap. It was from Mrs. Vaughn, and it

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invited him to a garden-party given in honor of Miss Carol Lester.

"One of Penelope's whims," Mrs. Dearborne said, contemptuously. "She twists her mother round her finger."

"I must get her to tell me how she does it," said Chauncey. He read the note again with a beatific expression that exasperated his mother beyond endurance.

"The mere sight of her name cheers you up," she said.

"Whose? Mrs. Vaughn's?" he asked, with an aggravating air of innocence.

"You know whom I mean well enough. You have not been to any sort of party for ten years—since you were a little boy in roundabouts, but I suppose you will go to this."

"Indeed I shall," he answered. "And I am going to order a new coat at once. Do men wear gloves at a garden-party, mother? I must write and ask Mildred. And how about a white vest? I wonder if I can get a copy of 'The Young Gentleman's Guide' in town? I feel wofully ignorant."

His dark eyes shone, and a mischievous smile lurked in the corners of his mouth. He bent down over his mother.

"Won't you wish me good-luck in my wooing?" he said, half in fun, half in earnest.

"If I wish you good-luck, I shall wish that she refuse you," she said; "but she will not."

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"I dare say your wish will come true," he rejoined, all the brightness fading from his face. "I am a poor, pitiful, contemptible sort of fellow, living on charity. I must tell her that, and she will laugh at me. I deserve it; I ought to have gone to work as other men do. Why didn't you make me?" he added, reproachfully.

"Why should you earn money when you have plenty?" she answered.

"I have none; I am your beneficiary. And I must tell her. And I must go down on my knees to you, and beg you to give me a little more money, so that I may marry a wife." He muttered something like an oath and strode out of the room. His mother watched him with longing eyes. She summoned up her courage; she would call him to her, and tell him about the will.

"Chauncey, come here." He made no reply. He had gone to his room, but he came down in a few minutes, and paused in the hall to get his hat. She did not call him again; she saw him pass the door, and stroll across the lawn in the hot sun. He jumped the iron fence, and entered the enemies' domain.

Mrs. Dearborne moistened her parched lips, feeling that she had let her opportunity slip by; but, after all, what did it matter? He must be told and she must tell him. Still, to-morrow was soon enough. Again she wondered what he would do, and her thoughts absorbed her so that she passed the entire morning in idle reflections, sitting there in the library and seeing the glaring sunbeams fall unhindered on the carpet.

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Chapter XV.

The story of the excursion to Ossining Lake leaked out, and the details grew picturesque as they were discussed.

"And it was three o'clock in the morning before they reached home," said Bertha Douglass, as she summed up her account of the iniquitous affair for the benefit of her sister tennis-players. "They crossed the river in a row-boat, and that horrid Mr. Perry was tipsy, and Chauncey Dearborne was afraid to go home, so he spent the night either at Mrs. Fanshawe's or the cottage. His mother was terribly angry. Of course Miss Lester was not to blame, but I should think she would find out what sort of a woman Mrs. Fanshawe is, and let her alone."

"I saw them riding together this morning," said Miss Yelverton.

"Miss Lester is so mysterious," put in Mrs. Thorpe. "I don't understand her. Did I tell you about her driving Chauncey Dearborne's horses one day? I saw her myself. For a girl brought up in Europe, she certainly has queer ideas. Perhaps she thinks she can do anything here in Newbroek."

"Hush," said Bertha Douglass, for Carol now appeared with Chauncey Dearborne. "Our wise man has suddenly developed a taste for society," she added, in an undertone.

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There was a little titter, and then followed an unnatural silence. They all looked at Carol rather curiously, and bade her good-morning, while they eyed her in a way that made her a trifle uncomfortable. She and Chauncey went off with Penelope and Bertha Douglass, while Mrs. Thorpe and Miss Yelverton remained seated on the bench beneath the trees. Miss Yelverton remarked that Miss Lester's innocent, candid air was cleverly assumed; it was impossible for a girl who had knocked about Europe all her life to be so utterly ignorant of the ways of the world.

"Oh, she is deep," said Mrs. Thorpe, with a wise shake of her pretty head. "It is ridiculous how fond Penelope is of her. Giving her a garden-party! What are you going to wear, Mary?"

"White, but I shall not come if the day is hot." And Miss Yelverton unfurled a huge fan, and began to sway it to and fro slowly. "Pen can never do anything by halves," she continued, "but her enthusiams die out as suddenly as they come. I am surprised, though, that she should take up Miss Lester with such vengeance. Of course the men are fooled; they always are by a new-comer. Don't you remember that Western girl who spent two winters with the De Barys? The first year everybody raved about her, and the next year she was forgotten; and so it will be with Miss Lester."

Will Vaughn approached now, and sat down next Miss Yelverton, for whom he had long cherished a hopeless, desperate sort of affection. They watched the tennis-players in silence until Miss Yelverton said,

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"Mr. Dearborne improves very fast. He volleys almost as well as you, Mr. Vaughn."

"Oh, far better," Vaughn exclaimed, modestly. "Chauncey does everything of the sort uncommonly well; and Miss Lester is beginning to play a good game. She is a great acquisition to the club."

Mrs. Thorpe giggled. "Yes," she said, "Miss Lester is a great acquisition. She has lured Chauncey Dearborne out of his den, and she can even make Doctor Silloway play. A few more young ladies from — from — where does she come from, any way?"

"Europe," answered Miss Yelverton, with an astute smile.

"Europe, Asia, or Africa," added Mrs. Thorpe. "It isn't safe to inquire too closely. The Dow girls and Mrs. Mott have found that out. They ventured to ask Miss Lester about her past career, and wanted to know what on earth brought her to Newbroek, and lo and behold! Miss Lester politely told them it was not their affair."

"Quite right of her," said Vaughn, with emphatic approval. "Those meddlesome women ought to be crushed every day in the week. Bravo, Miss Lester!" he shouted, as Carol caught a ball in mid-air, and flung it back just where Penelope could not get it. She turned and laughed. Her hair was rumpled, her hat was off, and she presented a somewhat dishevelled if very radiant appearance.

"We had better buy her a paper of hair-pins," said Mrs. Thorpe.

Will Vaughn looked at her, then at Miss Yelver-

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ton, and it flashed upon him that Miss Lester did not meet with everybody's approval.

"See here," he said, "why don't you like her? She is a charming girl, and she has the prettiest eyes I ever saw; and she is well-bred, and—and—well, why don't you like her? I do."

Mrs. Thorpe tilted her parasol and indulged in a solitary smile. It would not be sweet for Mary Yelverton to hear Will Vaughn going in raptures over the stranger.

Mrs. Vaughn now came out on the lawn, leaning on her husband's arm, and smiling a welcome upon the young people. Her son hastened to get a chair for her, to put a rug under her feet, and then remained at her side, and for the hundredth time patiently explained the game, which she never could understand. Mrs. Vaughn held a little court. She was a tiny woman, with a sweet, faded face and gentle manners, and she demanded homage from her children's friends. They clustered about her chair, and told her what a fine day it was, and how well so-and-so had played, and one ran off to get her a shawl, while another brought her a glass of weak claret and water. Chauncey came up among the last, fanning himself with his hat, his hair curling close around his damp brow.

"Ah, Chauncey," she said, giving the young man her hand, "I am glad to see you here. How is your mother? why doesn't she come with you? You must not neglect her, now."

Chauncey's red face grew crimson, and the bystanders smiled significantly; but Carol, whom Doc-

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tor Silloway was fanning, was calm and unconcerned, although she felt more than one curious glance shot towards her.

"Mothers are proverbially jealous," Mr. Vaughn said. "They are jealous of their sons, and we men are jealous of our daughters. Pen, dear, I can't play tennis with you, but I can order you either to play tennis or put a shawl about your shoulders."

She smiled, and picked up her racket, and went back to the courts, followed by every one except Chauncey. He strolled off to a secluded corner and lighted a cigarette. Presently Mr. Vaughn missed him.

"I wanted to speak to Chauncey," he said, peering about anxiously. "Has he gone home?"

"Oh no, he has not gone home," cried Mrs. Thorpe. He looked at her. "Because Miss Lester is still here," she added.

"Oh, ho," said the old gentleman, smiling, "sits the wind in that quarter?"

"A great gale of wind," Mrs. Thorpe answered.

"Glad of it," Mr. Vaughn said, stoutly. "Well, I won't bother the boy; I'll go and see his mother; she can answer my question."

Chauncey, from his shady nook, watched the tennis-players, the girls in their white flannel dresses, and the men in their knickerbockers, running to and fro over the smooth turf, their voices ringing out gayly. Mrs. Thorpe's red parasol bloomed like a huge tulip, and a blue shawl flung over a camp-chair caught the sunlight, and exulted in it like a living thing. At the gates two Italians paused and began to play,

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one a harp, the other a violin, and the music floated to Chauncey's ears with delicious sweetness. He stretched himself on the soft grass, clasped his hands under his head, and listened in a sort of dream. He thought of Jessica's words—

"I am never merry when I hear sweet music,"

and for the first time he understood them.

"Those confounded Italian beggars!" said a voice in his ear. "Asleep, Chaunce?"

He opened his eyes. "Asleep? No. Anybody given them anything?"

"Everybody is pining to set a dog on 'em," Doctor Silloway answered.

Chauncey went to the gates, and tossed a half-dollar into the Italian's outstretched hat, the doctor watching him with a sardonic smile.

"I like street-music," Chauncey said, when he came back. "I like a hand-organ once in a while—along early in spring."

"Oh, you do? Well, everybody knows you are a queer Dick. I hear sad stories about you—midnight revelry and all that sort of thing. Have a good time at the lake?"

Chauncey pulled his hat over his eyes. "So you have got hold of that, have you?" he said, curtly.

"Yes; everybody knows about it, and repeats the story with variations. Say, Chaunce, why the deuce don't you open Miss Lester's eyes? You and she seem to be very good friends. Get her to drop Mrs. Fanshawe. The girls"—he waved his hand vaguely towards the tennis-courts—"the girls are all down

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on Mrs. Fanshawe, and they will be down on Miss Lester soon. She, poor thing, is running her head against a stone wall. Then her name is mixed up with Oliver Floyd's, and you know he is in bad odor."

"What do you expect me to do about it?" Chauncey said. "Play the part of an impertinent meddler?" He rose impatiently and strode away, while the doctor repeated the words to himself.

"Impertinent meddler! Upon my word, he is in a nasty frame of mind."

Chauncey, hot and angry, wandered about restlessly until Carol was ready to go, and when they reached the cottage she said to him,

"What has gone wrong with you to-day?"

"Oh, the world is all askew," he exclaimed.

"A philosopher like you ought to be above the world," she rejoined.

He looked at her wistfully. "I think," he said, "that I could endure the flings of outrageous fortune if you gave me that rose you are wearing."

She laughed, and told him that he was absurd, but she gave him the rose. His face lighted up.

"Oh, I know I am absurd, but"—and he smoothed the crumpled rose petals tenderly—"but how am I to help it?"

"You are only a boy," she said, soothingly. "I feel as though I ought to give you some good advice."

"Give it to me," he exclaimed.

"Grow up as soon as possible;" and then she left him to ponder her words at his leisure.

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After dinner, while she and Mrs. Milinowski were seated on their south piazza, James came from the post-office, bringing a letter from Oliver Floyd. It was very short. He thanked Carol for the invitation she and Mrs. Milinowski extended, and he would be glad to come to Newbroek as soon as his engagements would permit.

"He comes only to confer a favor!" Carol exclaimed.

"Yes," said her aunt, "you wrote and asked him, you know."

"But I thought he would like to come," Carol rejoined. "Instead, it is a bore. I am sorry I urged him so."

Mrs. Fanshawe now sauntered up the path, prepared for a peaceful chat, and she lingered at the cottage until the town clock struck ten. She asked Carol to dine with her some day next week.

"We will make it Thursday," she said. "There will be only you and Mr. Perry; and Mr. Dearborne, of course."

"Why of course?" Mrs. Milinowski asked, sharply.

"Oh, because I like him. Thursday will suit you, Carol?"

"The garden-party comes off on that day," she replied. "Make it Friday."

"Very well, Friday." Mrs. Fanshawe's voice sounded rather constrained. She had not been invited to the garden-party, and she felt the slight keenly. Nearly everybody else on Quaker Hill had been invited, and she knew that her name had been deliberately rejected as a broad hint to Carol. But Carol,

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not supposing such a thing, talked about the party, asked Mrs. Fanshawe's advice on her toilet, and wound up with saying,

"Miss Vaughn told me to-day that she had invited only the pleasantest people she knew in town. Flattering, was it not? I feel as though I were to be presented at Court."

"I wonder if Chauncey will go?" Mrs. Fanshawe said.

"Of course he will. I expect the neighbors to do me honor on that day—turn out in force," and she patted Mrs. Fanshawe's hand. "Oh," she exclaimed, "it is all like a dream. Sometimes I wonder if Newbroek exists only in my imagination. I have been here but a few months, and yet I feel as though I had spent my whole life here."

Mrs. Fanshawe went home vowing vengeance on Penelope Vaughn. She poured her grievance in her husband's ears, and at first he laughed, but finally he gratified her by getting angry. "Damn their impertinence!" he cried, and his wife for once was glad to hear him swear.

Others beside the Fanshawes were passed over, and for a week there was a good deal of talk about the garden-party. Those who had been left out declared that they were glad of it; they were saved the trouble of sending regrets. Why should they care to be asked to meet this Miss Lester? The Dow girls had a dress-maker that week, the sort of dress-maker that comes to the house and furbishes up old clothes and doles out gossip as she stitches. They had a royal week of it. Their tongues wagged industriously,

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and when the dress-maker went to another patron she earned her salt as much by the entertainment she afforded as by the work she accomplished. And finally the day arrived, a bright summer day, warm indeed, but not too warm, and by five o'clock the Vaughn homestead was alive with the best people in Newbroek. They were entirely too good to be gay and frolicsome, considering dignity the first and greatest virtue, so they walked to and fro rather stiffly, engaged in elegant conversation, eyed one another with vague distrust, and sipped claret-cup gingerly. Meanwhile the band played joyous airs, and the girls longed for a waltz, some daring ones indulging in a private dance on the back piazza, an escapade which was afterwards criticised severely. Chauncey Dearborne leaned against a tree most of the time, and scowled, while he furtively watched Carol. She stood beside Mrs. Vaughn and Penelope until the guests had all come. Then she walked with this one, chatted with another, let a third fan her, a fourth fetch her refreshments, and smiled impartially on everybody. She treated them all alike, was Chauncey's morose reflection; she treated them precisely as she treated him. He was fast growing desperate, when a word was whispered in his ear.

"Stay," said Will Vaughn. "We are going to have a dance by-and-by in the house."

That was after nearly all the guests had gone. Mr. Vaughn himself led Carol out on the floor, and walked through a quadrille with grave delight. He danced with his wife, his daughter, with Mrs. Thorpe, and then he disappeared. He had forgotten how old

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he was, but his head hurt him now; there was a roaring in his ears, lights flickered before his eyes. He went into his quiet study and sat down. The perspiration stood in beads on his brow, his collar and cravat were moist. From the parlors came the sound of music and singing. They were dancing to "Mother Goose" melodies, and humming the baby-words,

> "Old Mother Hubbard
> She went to the cupboard
> To get her poor dog a bone—"

The music stopped.

"Come in here and rest," somebody said, and Chauncey, with Carol on his arm, entered the study.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he exclaimed. "I did not know you were here. Are you ill?"

Mr. Vaughn tried to smile. "No, no, my boy, but I am overheated. Come in and close the door. I want quiet. Are you enjoying yourselves?"

He held out his hand to Carol, and she put hers in it.

"Ah," he said, "it is a fine thing to be young, fine thing—

> 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.'"

His voice broke and his lips quivered. Again the music started up, and he bade them go and dance. "But, Chauncey," he added, "ask your mother if she does not think she had better send you to my office to-morrow, to talk over a certain matter? She will understand."

"Very well, I will tell her," he replied.

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The old man frowned. "Your mother is rather dilatory sometimes," he said. "Tell her that this matter must be settled to-morrow, and if she won't settle it, I will. There, now, go and dance—

'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying.'

And, Chauncey, ask my wife to step here, if you please."

When Carol returned to the drawing-room, she found her aunt seated on a sofa, the picture of a resigned, bored chaperon. Mrs. Milinowski had not come until evening, and several ladies tried to engage her in conversation, but while she responded gallantly to their efforts, she could not conceal her weariness. Mrs. Yelverton, who was clever and cautious, did succeed in interesting her somewhat, for she talked about Carol mostly. Finally she said,

"Your niece may find Newbroek dull after the novelty has worn off. Then, I suppose, she will long for her old home and her old friends."

"She has plenty of old friends in New York," said Mrs. Milinowski, "and that is not far away. I think, though, she prefers young friends," she added, dryly. "Who is that she is dancing with now?"

"My son," Mrs. Yelverton answered. "All the young men are at her feet."

"They generally are," said Mrs. Milinowski, placidly, and this speech struck her hearer as a very extraordinary one. She led the conversation in another direction, and in about half an hour it dawned upon Mrs. Milinowski that she was being cross-questioned.

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She rose, walked majestically across the room, and seated herself apart from the others.

"Why, what have you done?" Mrs. Van Zandt whispered to Mrs. Yelverton.

"Oh, I am innocent," Mrs. Yelverton answered, "but tastes differ. I confess I don't like Americans who have outlandish names, and speak English with an accent, and walk away when I am in the middle of a sentence."

"Then you would rather it were Mrs. Dearborne's son than yours," said Mrs. Van Zandt, looking significantly towards Chauncey. He stood beside Carol, fanning her and listening to her lightly spoken words with rapt attention. He stayed by her until the last, and it was he who wrapped her cloak about her, he who put her into the carriage, he who bade her the final good-night. And his miserable mother was as sure of it as if she had seen it all with her own eyes.

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Chapter XVI.

"Good-morning, mother," Chauncey said, seating himself at the breakfast-table. "You don't look very well. Have you a headache?"

"I cannot sleep," she answered, and he understood the tacit reproach. It was he who caused her sleepless nights, he who had brought that sad, anxious look to her face.

"Last night," he said, after the servant had left the room, "Mr. Vaughn told me that you must speak to me about something or other, and if you didn't care to speak to me he would. He wanted you to send me to his office. Shall I go? or will you unravel the mystery?"

"You had better go to him," she answered.

"But what is it about?" he asked. "Poor old Vaughn was so queer when he bade me give you the message. He is breaking up fast; I don't think he has many more years to live. He seemed quite childish last night."

"It is time he died," said Mrs. Dearborne—"time all we old people died. Our children are weary of us; they wish we were out of the way; they are only waiting and longing to step into our shoes."

Chauncey was silent during the rest of the meal, but when he rose from the table, he turned to his mother again.

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"And shall I go to Mr. Vaughn's office to-day?"

"Whenever you like. I do not care to talk to you any more."

And then Chauncey left the room. He went out on the lawn to smoke his cigar, and as usual crossed over to the cottage. It had come to be part of the daily routine to go out after breakfast, to see Carol under her big chestnut-tree, and to join her. He expected her to be there, and she did not disappoint him. He would read bits out of the newspaper to her while she busied herself with her work. If it were not too warm, they would often go down town on some useless errand, or drop in and see Mrs. Fanshawe.

"Not tired out by the festivities?" he said to her this morning.

"Not in the least." She counted some stitches, and wrinkled her brow in deep thought. "Would you make that leaf a little bigger?" she added, holding off a bit of embroidery at arm's-length.

"Yes, if I wanted to. Good-morning, Mrs. Milinowski."

Mrs. Milinowski eyed him sternly and bowed to him, but she spoke to Carol.

"I want you to take that butter back this morning. We can't eat it, and James has not time to go. And tell the farmer that he need not bring us any more of his butter. It is abominable."

"Who is the farmer?" Chauncey asked.

"Oh, old Mr. Wiggins. Mrs. Fanshawe recommended him," said Carol; "but his butter is bad. Well, I will take it back."

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"I will drive you," Chauncey said with decision.

As he walked away, Mrs. Milinowski looked at him for a minute; then turned to Carol.

"My dear," said she, "he is the Berlin lieutenants over again."

"All of them?" Carol said.

"Worse than all of them," Mrs. Milinowski answered. She forebore to ask any questions, but she laid her hand on Carol's shoulder. "Oh, my dear, you are not a child. Do remember not to be too kind."

"I shall be no kinder than I mean," was Carol's response, and Mrs. Milinowski looked at her with upraised eyebrows. "He is so honest, so true," she went on, with a little burst of enthusiasm. "He could never be mean or deceitful or ungenerous. How can you compare him to any of those Berlin men? Those military, wooden dolls—those vain, pompous, bewhiskered creatures?"

"Mr. Dearborne has not even a mustache," said Mrs. Milinowski, pensively; and Carol laughed at this, and laughing, and humming a queer Swabian folk-song, went off to get her hat and gloves.

Meanwhile, Chauncey had ordered his horses, and while the man was harnessing them, he remembered that he perhaps ought to go to Mr. Vaughn's office that morning. His mother sat on the shaded veranda with her needle-work, and he hastened towards her.

"How cool this is," he exclaimed. The Virginia creeper enclosed the veranda, making it a sort of fresh, green nest.

"Did you come to tell me that?" said Mrs. Dearborne, smiling on him.

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"No; I came to ask if there is any great hurry about that matter Mr. Vaughn spoke of yesterday."

"I don't think there is any particular hurry," she said. "Why?"

"Oh, because I want to do something else this morning."

Her face hardened. "Something for Miss Lester, I suppose?"

"Yes, something for Miss Lester."

"Come here," she said; and when he stood before her, she looked up at him earnestly. "As a great favor, I ask you to please me to-day, not Miss Lester. Go and see Mr. Vaughn."

"I will, if there is any reason why I should go this morning instead of this afternoon," he answered. "But if it is a mere whim—"

"Why should you disregard my whims?" she cried in sudden anger. He shrugged his shoulders, and left her to her own reflections. From her shaded nook she saw him and Carol drive off, both smiling and joyous. She saw Carol put a flower in his button-hole; she saw her son lift his hat to Mrs. Milinowski, and throw a kiss to Leila. It seemed to her as though he were entangled in the web of a Circe. The miserable mother wept bitter tears. She had lost her boy, the child who had always been tenderest to her, who had always regarded her slightest wish. The other two children had long ago drifted away from her. Lawrence never wrote except when he wanted money; Mildred sneered at her; and now Chauncey had deserted her. She felt unspeakably desolate. He would seize half her fortune, and turn

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his back on her. He could think only of the woman who had entrapped him, and who in time would render his whole life miserable. Mrs. Dearborne was not logical; she was only wretched. And to aggravate her, Mr. Vaughn came at noon, and reproved her sharply when he found that she had not yet told her son about the will.

"Do you mean never to tell him?" he cried, losing his temper. "I can't wink at that, Mrs. Dearborne. It would be rank felony. I will tell him; I will tell him to-day."

He seized his hat and went off in anger. But he did not tell him that day, for Chauncey forgot all about going to the office. He lay in a hammock during the long afternoon reading a novel, and that evening he dined at the Fanshawes'. Mr. Perry was there, and played court-jester. They dined on the wide piazza, while from the garden came the smell of flowers, and now and then the sleepy chirp of a belated robin. The men smoked, and Mrs. Fanshawe lighted a cigarette, vainly urging Carol to try one too.

"Are you afraid of your fine friends?" she said with a little covert sneer.

"Who are my fine friends, if you are not one of them?" Carol answered.

"Oh, the Vaughns. Don't you know that they did not invite me to the garden-party? You were given to understand that you ought to drop me."

"I thought you did not go because you had a headache," Carol exclaimed.

"My dear, I was not invited; I am not good enough. And I confess that I feel hurt about it."

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"You needn't feel hurt," said her husband.

"I am the one to be hurt," Carol said. "If I had dreamed of such a thing, I would not have gone to the party."

"Then it would have been 'Hamlet' with Hamlet left out," Chauncey remarked. "Any way, it was dull enough. I hate such affairs. I will never go to another."

"Because it is hardly likely another will be given in Miss Lester's honor," Mrs. Fanshawe said. "Well, it is over now."

"No, it is not over," said Carol. "I shall speak to Miss Vaughn about it, but I suppose she has the right to invite whom she pleases. Still, she ought to have considered me a little, and she ought to have asked you. I shall see Miss Vaughn to-morrow; I shall demand an explanation."

Mrs. Fanshawe expostulated, but Carol was too vexed to heed her. She could not endure the thought that she had been dictated to, told whom she should know and whom she should avoid. Her independent spirit was up in arms, and on the way home she spoke her mind freely to Chauncey. She appealed to him at last, and he gave her his opinion reluctantly.

"Well," he said, "since you ask me, I will tell you that I think you had better let the matter drop. I like Mrs. Fanshawe, and yet I must confess that people have some reason for disapproving of her. If she were not so determined to trample on customs and prejudices she would be a good deal wiser; but she parades her defiance, and flings the glove in everybody's face. It is very tactless."

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"Ah, you think women should truckle to public opinion," cried Carol in scorn.

"No, I do not; but I think they are foolish to run their heads against stone walls," he said, bluntly. "And if Fanshawe were not a complacent fool he would make his wife behave herself."

"I am disappointed in you, Mr. Dearborne," Carol said. "You side with the Vaughns. I shall drop their acquaintance, for I will not allow them to dictate to me, or even hint that I should do thus and so."

"Oh," cried Chauncey in dismay, "you are quite mistaken. They do not want to dictate. I wish you would take my advice. Pray let the matter drop. You will set the town by the ears."

"That would be very amusing," she rejoined. "I suppose there would be a Fanshawe clique and a Vaughn clique — Guelph and Ghibelline; and you would go over to the enemy."

"I am always on your side," he said. They had reached the cottage, and he bade her a rather mournful good-night. "You won't quarrel with Penelope Vaughn?" he added, pleadingly.

"Quarrel with her? Oh no, but I shall tell her what I think. She chose to put a slight upon Mrs. Fanshawe, and she knew Mrs. Fanshawe had become my friend. I shall call on Miss Vaughn bright and early to-morrow morning, you may rest assured of that. And now good-night."

"Good-night," he echoed.

But the Angel of Death crept into the sleeping town that night, and laid a hand on good old Philip Vaughn. All Newbroek knew before noon that he

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had been found dead in his bed, a smile of peace on his lips; and Carol went to Penelope in sorrowful sympathy, not in anger. Even at such a moment, though, all resentment is not forgotten; Mrs. Fanshawe sent a polite note of condolence and a basket of flowers, heaping coals of fire on poor Penelope's bowed head. There was a great funeral; there were resolutions passed by the Duke County Law Association, there were more resolutions passed by the bank directors, there were obituary notices in the papers, and then this little world washed its hands of Philip Vaughn.

Will Vaughn picked up the reins which his father had dropped, and wondered whether the old clients would fear to trust a man of twenty-seven, and especially did he wonder if Mrs. Dearborne would take another counsellor. The widow called on him in his office one day not a week after his father had been buried.

"I suppose you were entirely in your father's confidence," she said.

"No," he answered, honestly, "I was not. My father grew very secretive as he grew older. Still, your business is simple enough. I have been thinking of going in partnership with Mr. Gale"—naming an old and well-known lawyer—"I am afraid I am too young to be trusted."

"You lack experience," she said, "and I think you act wisely in associating yourself with Mr. Gale. By-the-way, just before your father died he wanted me to arrange a certain matter. Did he mention it to you?"

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"Yes," Will answered, "the mortgage on the Mill building."

Mrs. Dearborne looked at him fixedly, and he grew rather uneasy. "If you like," he said, "I will see what Mr. Gale thinks about it. Father thought you had better foreclose; they can't pay the interest. He talked to me about it. Is there anything else, Mrs. Dearborne?"

"We can attend to the mortgage another time," she said. "Good-morning."

She was trembling so that she was glad when she had crossed the walk and reached her carriage. She drove home at once, and entered her son's room, where she found him writing a letter to his sister.

"Mildred and Joe have asked me to go yachting with them," he said, "and I am writing to say how it grieves me to decline their kind invitation."

He put a stamp on the envelope, and smiled.

"Did you tell Mildred why you could not leave Newbroek?" Mrs. Dearborne said. "Chauncey, you must listen to me," she added, dropping her sneering manner; "I have something to say."

He sighed. "Yes, I can listen, mother, but I wish you would not say it."

"I have a proposition to make to you. You know how troubled, how anxious I am." She paused; he looked at her, and nodded. "If you will go to Europe, or anywhere this summer, go now," she continued, with sudden energy; "go anywhere and stay a year, meanwhile holding no communication with Miss Lester, and go unbound by any promise, on your return, if you want to marry her, you can do so; and

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then you shall have the farm, and I will settle the income on you that your father meant you should have."

"A year?" he repeated. "A year would make no difference."

"It might," she exclaimed. "Will you promise me, Chauncey?"

He shook his head. "I dare not; I am not sure that I could keep it. But I will think of it, mother. Perhaps I will accept your terms. Let me have a week or two to think it over. It is not quite generous of you, for you know very well that I am helpless. If I refuse to go, what then?"

Mrs. Dearborne's eyebrows contracted at his question.

"Ah, I see," Chauncey exclaimed. "You will drive me to the wall. There is no alternative. I suppose I shall have to promise you, but I will make no promise at this minute."

He took the letter he had written to his sister, and walked slowly towards the town. As he was about to drop it into a street-box he saw Oliver Floyd approaching in Mrs. Milinowski's carriage. James was driving, but Floyd ordered him to pull up the horse.

"Take my portmanteau on to the cottage," he said, "and tell Mrs. Milinowski that I shall be there in half an hour. Mr. Dearborne, I am glad to meet you," he continued, stepping out of the carriage and giving his hand to Chauncey.

"You have just come?" Chauncey said.

"Yes; and I left town in such a confounded hurry that I forgot to send an important telegram. You

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are going townward; won't you direct me to a telegraph-office?"

"Certainly," Chauncey answered, and as he spoke he absently dropped the letter back into his pocket.

"And I am glad of the stroll," Floyd continued. "I have been cooped up in town until I am cramped and baked and wilted. I hope to have a whiff of fresh air, but I don't mean to stay here. I am going to carry Mrs. Milinowski and Miss Lester off yachting."

"Where?" said Chauncey. He looked at Floyd in surprise; he had never known him to be so exuberant and talkative.

"Oh, to Newport, and along the Sound—run into New London, of course," Floyd answered. "The yacht does not belong to me, but it is mine for a fortnight, to do with as I please. Do you ever yacht it?"

"Sometimes," said Chauncey, taking the letter out of his pocket, and tearing it up as he spoke. When they reached the telegraph-office Floyd sent a long despatch, and Chauncey a very short one, and together they strolled homeward.

"I have decided to accept Joe's invitation," Chauncey said to his mother that evening. "I am going yachting with him and Mildred. They have asked a lot of people—"

"You have changed your mind very suddenly," said Mrs. Dearborne, looking at him narrowly.

"A man may avail himself of a woman's privilege once in awhile. You don't look at all well, mother. If you say the word, I will telegraph to Joe not to

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expect me, and you and I can run down to New London for a fortnight, or so. The sea air would do you good."

"Nothing would do me good," she answered, "except your promise to leave Newbroek for a year."

He frowned. "I dare say I shall promise it; I do not see what else I can do. It is a hard thing, though, for a man to feel as helpless as I feel; I cannot smoke a cigar without remembering that you paid for it. If I ever have any money of my own!—"

Mrs. Dearborne looked at him anxiously, and her face grew pale.

"Well, if you ever have any money?" she repeated.

"I wonder," he said half to himself, and without regarding her question—"I wonder if you have any right to withhold money from me. I wonder, if I carried the matter into a court—"

She rose and laid her hand on his arm. "Chauncey," she said, in a husky whisper, "would you do such a thing as that? would you subject me to such a humiliation?"

"Have you acted generously towards me?" he answered. "Oh, no, no," he exclaimed, "you need not fear that I shall wash the family linen in public—not, at least, unless you make me so angry that I forget everything in the wish to carry my point. I do not know why we talk and talk and talk," he added, wearedly.

He went to his room, and sat down by the table. Several new books were there, but he did not open them. On his desk lay the manuscript of an article

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he was writing for a scientific magazine. It broke off in the middle of a sentence. He finally collected his notes, and tried to bring the article to an end; but he could not write, he could not even spell, and at last he flung manuscript, notes, and sheets of clean paper into a drawer, and went out for a stroll with his dog.

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Chapter XVII.

Carol reproached Floyd gently for not having come sooner. It was on the evening of his arrival, and they sat on the piazza, watching the great mid-summer moon escape from filmy clouds, and dim the glory of the stars.

"Why did you not come before this?" she said. "We invited you so long ago."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I had all sorts of business entanglements; my nose is always on the grindstone, and then, too, I was half afraid to come."

She laughed softly. "Afraid that a bachelor guest might be a burden to us women?"

He turned and looked at her in the moonlight. She bent towards him, still smiling, and he could feel her breath on his cheek.

"A bachelor guest," he repeated. Then he sprang to his feet. "I have something to tell you," he exclaimed.

"Something pleasant, I am sure," she rejoined. "You always bring good news. What is it? What plan have you? Speak out."

He took a turn up and down the piazza, and when he seated himself beside her he said,

"How would you like to go yachting for a week?"

"I should enjoy it—oh, I can't tell you how much.

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I love the sea. I love to sail and sail—sail anywhere, sail forever."

"And Mrs. Milinowski?" he asked. "We should want her and Leila and Annette, and—and James."

"Aunt Milinowski would never go," Carol said, with great regret. "She hates the sea. But"—here she clasped her hands in rapture—"I love it; I want to go."

"Haven't you some friends whom you could ask?" he said. "Some married woman with an inoffensive husband?"

Carol looked very cunning. "Listen," she said, dropping her voice. "Now I have a scheme. You stay here for a week and cultivate the Fanshawes—they are Mr. Perry's cousins. I am sure they would go. Mrs. Fanshawe would want to take Jerry."

"A little boy? No," said Floyd.

"A little dog," said Carol, "a cocker spaniel. She has no children. Come, what do you say to my scheme?"

"What would Mrs. Milinowski say?" he asked.

Carol looked down demurely and then shot a laughing glance at him.

"You out-American the Americans," he said. "You have put your aunt in the proper place, I see."

She thought she detected a suspicion of disapproval in his voice. "Aunt Mil won't be a severe duenna," she said. "She doesn't like to be bothered. You think that I am—bold."

"I think you are an enigma," he said, dryly.

She rose, and held out her hand. "Come," she commanded.

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"Where?" he asked.

"Across the street to the Fanshawes'. They are on their piazza. I see two burning eyes. One eye is Mr. Fanshawe's cigar; the other his wife's cigarette."

"And does she smoke?" he said, as he followed her.

"Sometimes; she does anything she likes."

"A dangerous woman," Floyd remarked. "And I must conciliate her; I must be bland and agreeable, so that you and I may go sailing over the seas."

The yachting-party was not mentioned that evening. Mrs. Fanshawe, however, liked Floyd, and her husband liked whomsoever she did, so a note was at once sent to Mrs. Milinowski, bidding her bring her niece and her guest to dine with the Fanshawes on Sunday.

At the dinner-table the subject of the yachting-party was broached, and Mrs. Fanshawe was charmed with the plan, but her husband demurred a little when Floyd asked if they would be ready to sail on Wednesday. "The *Lady Clare* lies off New York," he said, "and we had better board her there, for the Hudson is a mean river to sail down. We might be becalmed for hours."

"I am afraid—" began Mr. Fanshawe, dubiously.

"You are not afraid," cried his wife. "The world can go without baking-powder for a week."

He laughed. "Yes, and I have earned a holiday," he added.

And so the matter was settled, but Mr. Fanshawe told his wife privately that he and she only made a tail for the kite.

A day or two later Floyd drove Carol out, after

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the blazing sun had dropped below the hills, but before twilight had set in. They jogged slowly down the River Road, meeting all the Newbroek world, and all the Newbroek world bowed and smiled when it saw Carol. Floyd was at once amazed and amused. It was not more than three months ago that he had brought Carol here, a stranger, and he began to laugh when she bowed to Mr. Thorpe, who rode by on horseback.

"Well?" she said.

"Oh, I am laughing at you," he answered. "You know so many people, and they are all so glad to see you. I remember you did not expect to know any one in Newbroek; you proposed to turn your back on all the world, and devote yourself to Leila's education. Has the education begun yet?"

"It is not my fault that I know so many people," she returned.

"Of course it is not your fault; it is your destiny. I pity you from the bottom of my heart, for I know that you hoped to lead a quiet, humdrum, retired life up here in the country. You wanted to read and improve your mind, and I— Well, I thought so too, and I spent at least two hours choosing elevating literature for you. Alas! last evening I found that the leaves of several of the books I sent had not yet been cut. As for Leila, she has only learned that Mr. Dearborne's big dog can eat a plateful of Albert biscuit in five minutes."

"We have not had time yet to begin anything seriously," Carol said. "And I could not act churlish and refuse to see people. And the weather is so warm."

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"You could never act churlish, I am sure," he remarked. "But you must not let yourself be trodden upon. I fear you are too amiable by half. I dare say that many is the time you have sat down to enjoy Hallam's 'Middle Ages,' or Machiavelli's 'History of Florence,' and been obliged to relinquish those fascinating books, and ride horseback with Mr. Dearborne—merely out of kindness to Mr. Dearborne."

She colored and bit her lip. "No," she said. "I would rather ride with Mr. Dearborne or Mrs. Fanshawe than spend a fine morning over books."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "you have become a Wordsworthian:

> 'One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can.'

Teach you more of woman, too, probably; of Mrs. Fanshawe, for instance. Do you remember the last lines of the poem?"

"I never read it," she answered.

"Indeed? Well, I can quote the lines, I think:

> 'Enough of science and of art—'

that means Darwin and Ruskin—

> 'Close up those barren leaves—'

Rollin's 'Ancient History,' of course.

> 'Come forth—'

a plain command to go horseback riding—

> 'Come forth, and bring with you a heart—'

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the heart is absolutely necessary. No use to come forth and leave your heart at home—

> 'Come forth, and bring with you a heart
> That watches and receives.'

Now has your heart been watching and receiving?"

"If you knew how foolish you were!" Carol said, in resigned despair.

"Oh, I know I am foolish," he exclaimed, lightly. "I am not a savant; I know nothing of African jungles and blood-thirsty lions and tigers."

"What do you think of Mrs. Fanshawe?" Carol asked, abruptly.

"She is amusing," he replied, with a shrug of his shoulders, "but her brain isn't well balanced. And she thrusts her ideas on one. I had not known her an hour before she aired her opinions concerning the proper way to keep Sunday, the propriety of women's smoking, the superior charms of men's society, the best way of cutting a terrier's ears, the prevalence of malicious gossip, and so on and so on. But I repeat, she is amusing. She and her husband will be the very ones to have on our yachting-party. He is a good fellow, and he smokes excellent cigars. I can't understand the bond of union between you and her, but I can see that she has inoculated you with some of her notions. I hope you won't take to cigarettes."

"Do you think it dreadful for a woman to smoke?" she asked, feeling that, after all, Mrs. Fanshawe was not so perfectly original and altogether delightful.

"It is like rouge; it won't stand the osculatory

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test," he answered, coolly. "A woman ought to be, first of all, sweet and kissable."

He looked at her with a lazy approval that at once enraged and humiliated her. She hated herself for blushing. He smiled, and continued to look at her until she grew scarlet from chin to brow. At last, she glanced at him appealingly, and he gave his attention to the horse, and began to talk about the yachting-party.

"You won't want any fine clothes," he said. "A couple of flannel frocks and a felt hat will be enough. I will get you the proper hat—perhaps I had better get you the frocks, too."

"You will get me nothing," she said.

"Oh, have I vexed you?" he exclaimed. "I didn't mean it; I beg a thousand pardons. But I can't go on my knees to you, and creep and crawl, and be abjectly servile. You must let me be independent. I am too old a dog to learn new tricks." He pulled up the horse as he spoke, and pointed with his whip to a road running at right angles from the highway. "Where does that go to?" he asked.

"Nowhere in particular," she answered; "but we had better turn back now. It is growing dark."

"Are you afraid of the dark?" he said. "Remember we shall have a moon presently. I like the looks of that road; I am sure it will take us far from the madding crowd."

It led to the Dearborne farm, but Carol did not tell him that. They went past the farm-house, and from the windows came subdued gleams of light. A dog started up out of the shadow, and barked fiercely at

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the passing carriage. On they went, until the road plunged into the darkness of a dense cedar wood, where the trees grew straight and stiff on either side, and only a little strip of sky showed overhead. Before them lay the river, and along the western hills beyond were banked purple sullen clouds, their edges just touched with the last rays of the vanished sun. The glow faded out of the sky, and a jagged flash of lightning shot through the clouds. The silence for a second was ominous; then came a clap of thunder that seemed to break asunder the heavens, and threaten the earth with crushing destruction.

Floyd turned back, and drove the horse fast, but the great drops were beginning to fall when he stopped before the Dearborne farm-house.

"Make haste," he said to Carol.

"I won't go in that house," she cried. As she spoke, the lightning played in the sky for a full minute, and every tree, every bush in the yard, stood out distinctly. The farmer, who had heard the wheels, came to the door, and before she knew what she was doing, Carol was out of the carriage, and the farmer had driven the horse to the barn. The farmer's wife showed them to a tiny sitting-room, with a door opening into a much larger and better furnished room beyond. Some one was in the room, for the door was sent to with a gentle push; but it did not quite shut, and stood ajar.

"Miss Lester," Floyd said, "I told you you were an enigma, and I should like to know what was your objection to entering this house. Is it a robber's den? Is it a small-pox hospital?"

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A tremendous peal of thunder saved her the trouble of replying to this question.

"We shall have to stay all night," Floyd said, "unless the rain holds up; but of course it is only a shower. I rather like this house; I wonder if the farmer would take me to board."

"Are you not contented with the entertainment at the cottage?" she asked, in a subdued voice.

"Oh yes, indeed, but perhaps you will grow tired of me."

"That is not likely. And then I feel as though you had a right to come to the cottage. It is yours by reason of discovery; we owe it to you."

"Discovery counts for nothing," he rejoined, dryly. "And please don't talk as though you were grateful to me. I have done so little, after all — much less than I wish I could. And you even refuse the flannel frocks, friendship's humble offering."

They both laughed, Carol rather nervously, and she walked to the window, where she stood listening to the steady pour of the rain.

"Mr. Floyd," she said. He had seated himself in a rocking-chair, and was oscillating gently to and fro. "Mr. Floyd, I don't think I care to go yachting."

"Why not? Because we are caught in a thundershower? The Fanshawes are invited, and everything is arranged, and we ready to start to-morrow, and now you say you don't care to go. If the party does not please you, ask whomsoever you like—the smiling doctor, the immaculate little Yelverton, the dapper Van Zandt, or any of your satellites. I don't know the half of them, even by name. The young

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Dearborne prince might suit your highness. Or do you want ladies? If so, name them, but please don't insist on elderly tabbies. Mrs. Fanshawe is married, and a married woman is a necessary evil, I suppose; but she will not overact the part of chaperon. She suits me perfectly—that is, as a necessary evil."

"What is the name of the yacht?" Carol asked. "The *Lady Clare?*"

"The *Lady Clare.* She is fitted up sumptuously. You have heard of the school-boy who at family prayer, when it came to his turn to read, roared out that the rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen, and dined 'sumpustuously' every day? You shall dine 'sumpustuously' on the yacht, but you cannot don purple and fine linen. Those flannel frocks must be worn. What color will you have them? I want to order them by telegraph of Madame Fifine. How would a scarlet one, a yellow one, and a blue suit you?"

She looked at him with wondering eyes. His face was flushed, and as he talked, he continually stroked his gray mustache. He walked about the room, he commented on the furniture, criticised the flaring lithographs with perfect gravity, as though they were works of art.

"Come here and get the light better on this picture," he said, halting before a gaudy daub, representing a very curly-haired girl admiring herself in a mirror. "Come here, Miss Lester; this is really Rubensesque. What life, what color, what perspective, what chiaro-oscuro! Culture is making

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rapid strides. Even in this lonely farm-house we find traces of educated taste. What do you suppose is in that next room?" And he pointed to the half-closed door.

"Don't go in there," Carol said. That was enough. He flung open the door and entered, she following him, prepared to apologize to some one of the farmer's family for the intrusion. By the light of a shaded lamp sat Mrs. Dearborne reading. She looked up, and bowed to Carol, who grew first hot, then cold, for she knew that every word of Floyd's raillery had been overheard. What would Mrs. Dearborne think?

"We were caught by the shower," she said, "and we took refuge here. I had no idea you were in the house, Mrs. Dearborne."

"No?" said the widow, with a rising inflection.

"We must apologize," Floyd said. And then he and Carol stood there rather awkwardly. Mrs. Dearborne did not ask them to sit down, but she closed her book and took off her spectacles. She was staying at the farm while Chauncey was away, trying by the change to regain her appetite, and hoping that the peace and quiet would give her sleep. Black care, however, pursued her and destroyed her comfort. She had grown pale and thin; there were deep lines on her face, her eyes were sunken, and she, who had always scorned nervousness, could neither sit nor lie in one position for ten minutes together. She looked at Carol, whom she had come to regard as the author of her misery, and her displeasure showed itself plainly.

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"We are disturbing your reading," Carol said. "Good-evening."

"Good-evening," Floyd echoed, and the widow inclined her head stiffly. No sooner had they left the room than she rose and shut the door, turning the key in the lock sharply.

Floyd's eyebrows went up at the sound. "I am afraid Prince Dearborne's mamma is an unpleasant sort of person."

"She heard all you have been saying," Carol said, in despair.

"And what of that?" he asked.

"You have talked all the time, and talked nothing but nonsense," she exclaimed.

His face grew grave. "I know it," he said, humbly. "I am not often so gay, so light-hearted, so joyous."

She smiled at him. "Do you think you deceive me? You are not light-hearted, you are troubled."

"It's true," he returned. "And it is all because you refuse these flannel frocks."

She turned from him with a gesture of impatience. He bewildered her, almost angered her.

"At least," she said, "you are not the same man you were when I first knew you. But I cannot understand any one; you puzzle me, everybody puzzles me."

"Except Prince Dearborne," he said.

"No," she exclaimed, "he puzzles me most of all —not quite most of all."

"Who, then, is the greatest enigma?"

She let her hands drop helplessly; she shook her head as she answered,

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"Myself."

The farmer came now, and said that the rain had stopped and the carriage was at the door. The drive home was a silent one, for Floyd's jocose mood had fled, and Carol's self-inflicted questions absorbed her utterly. That night she went into her aunt's bedroom, where Mrs. Milinowski stood before the dressing-table, carefully putting pins in the cushion so that they made the letter M.

"Aunt Mil," Carol said, "shall I go?"

"Yachting?" Mrs. Milinowski asked; and when Carol nodded, she stared at her blankly. "Why not? Isn't everything arranged? What ails you, child?"

"I believe the Roman fever has affected my brain," said Carol, with an uneasy little laugh. "I used to think I was very wise; I could read all the Berlin lieutenants, but now everybody is a mystery."

Mrs. Milinowski looked concerned. "My dear," she said, "you need a little lavender."

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Chapter XVIII.

The *Lady Clare* was a large schooner yacht, and there was room and to spare for Floyd and his friends. They sailed away on Wednesday, taking Mr. Perry with them, but he deserted them on the fourth day, after a night of horrible sea-sickness. He had enlivened them greatly, and his departure was sadly felt, although Mrs. Fanshawe gallantly strove to take his place as court-jester. She could not make Floyd gay, and she soon gave over trying. He was silent and depressed, and his humor seemed to affect Carol. They anchored off Newport on Tuesday, and stayed there several days, enjoying the solemn spectacle of Americans playing the game of English gentry. Floyd met hosts of men friends, but he brought none of them aboard the yacht, although one or two of them asked permission to call on the ladies. He always found means to prevent their coming, and at last he sailed away from Newport, rather than have Mr. Somers make Carol's acquaintance. Mr. Somers owned the *Lady Clare*, and Floyd could not have refused to allow him to visit his own yacht; so when he heard that Somers was coming he ordered the captain to get off as soon as possible, and make for New London.

There was a light breeze when they started, and their progress during the day was slow; but towards

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evening the wind freshened, and the yacht flew forward as though to make up for lost time. The Fanshawes went below early, leaving Floyd and Carol on deck.

"You are not tired or sleepy, I hope," he said to her.

"I could not go below on a night like this," she returned. "It is sheer happiness for me, this sailing by starlight. I wish you could enjoy it."

"Why do you think I am not enjoying it?"

"Oh, because! You have not been happy since we left New York."

"My bad temper began long before that," he rejoined. "I wish you would let me be as egotistical as I please this evening. I want to talk about myself."

She drew her shawl around her. "Well, I am ready to listen; I like autobiography. Begin at the beginning, when you were a little boy—"

"When I was a little boy," he said, "I was always crying for the moon. I got over it after a while, but now I am crying for the moon again. The moon doesn't care; she smiles serenely on me and on everybody else—"

"Oh, that is not autobiography," said Carol. "That is allegory. I don't like allegory, and I think I will go below."

She rose as she spoke, but he begged her to remain, and he promised to talk no more allegory, so she seated herself on the cushions once more. He dropped down beside her, and neither spoke for a long time. The yacht flew forward like a bird, the

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water dashing up about her prow, and sometimes flinging a handful of salt spray over the deck. Suddenly Carol rose.

"I am going to bid you good-night," she said.

He looked up at her. "Did you read my thoughts?" he asked. "Are you women all gifted with second sight? Do you know what words were on my lips then?"

He sprang to his feet, and took her hand.

"Good-night," she said, freeing herself from him.

"Carol," he cried, but she turned and left him standing there, repeating her name again and again to himself.

She opened the door of her state-room with trembling hands, with trembling hands she folded her shawl mechanically and laid it away. That night she could not sleep, and when she bade Floyd good-morning her face was pale, and there were those telltale lines under her eyes.

"The Fanshawes have breakfasted and gone on deck," he said. "It is nearly ten o'clock."

"I was tired this morning," she returned. "Surely you have had your breakfast?"

"Oh no," he answered, "I waited for you; you might have known that I would."

When she went on deck she found Mrs. Fanshawe reclining on a great rug, her husband holding an umbrella over her head.

"Good-morning, dear," she said to Carol. "This is bliss;" and she closed her eyes in ecstasy.

"Where are we?" Carol asked. "What is that shore? What State are we in?"

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"Elysium," murmured Mrs. Fanshawe.

"Connecticut," said Floyd; and then there was a lazy laugh. "This is the Thames River, and we are sailing towards New London," he continued. As he spoke he pulled out a telescope, laid it over his shoulder, and bade Carol look abroad.

"I can see the great world," she said. "There are two or three yachts following us. That big one is chasing us, I believe. Yes, somebody is looking at us through a field-glass. It is a gentleman. *Bon jour, monsieur.* Are you saying *bon jour* to me, I wonder?" and she blew a kiss to him. "Oh, he saw me!" she exclaimed, and she left off observations at once.

"What yacht is it?" said Floyd to the man at the wheel, for sailors know all vessels by instinct.

"The *Shamrock*," he replied. "There ain't a faster boat sails out of New York; no, nor a crankier."

"*Shamrock?*" repeated Floyd. "Then she belongs to De Lancy Seymour."

"He sold her this spring," said the man at the wheel. "I don't remember who bought her, though I have heard the name."

The breeze freshened, and the *Shamrock* came on bravely, making a great show of snowy canvas. Then the captain of the *Lady Clare* shook out a reef and took the wheel himself, remarking that he guessed it would be nip and tuck who'd git into New London first that day.

"I bet we do," said Floyd to Carol. "I bet you a pair of slippers with silver buckles."

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"I take the bet," she returned; "and if I lose I will embroider you a smoking-cap."

"The third smoking-cap he has won on this voyage," Mr. Fanshawe remarked to his wife in a low tone.

"He has won more than that," she said, significantly. They looked at each other and smiled.

"They are always sparring," he said, "but last night they sat up on deck and whispered together as confidentially as you please. You ought to give Miss Lester a hint—remind her that he is married."

"Not my affair," quoth the chaperon, lazily.

Carol stood near the wheel, and openly bribed the captain to lose the race. "I want those silver buckles," she said. "Take in a reef, please. Is that the phrase?" she added, glancing at Floyd.

"Oh yes," he answered, with a quick frown.

"What is the matter this morning?" Mr. Fanshawe asked.

"Smoked too many cigars," Floyd answered.

"You had better take to a pipe," said Mr. Fanshawe.

"Tom," murmured his wife, "your advice is thrown away. You cannot minister to a mind diseased."

"Humph," said Tom, uneasily, "I don't like the looks of things."

"Then don't look at them," she returned.

The *Shamrock* was gaining on them, and now she came so near that the people on deck could be distinguished.

"Joe Pelham, his wife, Miss Herbert, Fitz Le Roy, Colonel Morton, and Prince Dearborne," said Floyd.

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Chauncey started up from the deck, and shouted, "Whither bound?"

"New London," Floyd shouted in reply.

"See you this evening," Chauncey called out, and then the *Shamrock's* sails caught a puff of wind, and she flew away from the *Lady Clare*.

"See you this evening," Mrs. Fanshawe repeated to her husband. "Tom, dear, this is growing very interesting, don't you think?"

"Intensely," he said. "I feel old and much married."

"Oh, I will pick up somebody," she rejoined, soothingly, "and I will make eyes at him, so you can get jealous too, and then it will be a *partie carrée*."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Fanshawe, who was innocent of French, and was proud of it.

"Four of a kind," his wife answered.

There had been playing of cards on the yacht, and Mrs. Fanshawe gloated over the three dollars she had won on four deuces. She was very strict in her ideas, and would not play a high game. Penny ante she declared was mere sport; two-cent ante was gambling. Her husband took care to win as much as she lost, and he jingled the silver pieces now in his pocket, and chuckled.

The *Lady Clare* swept up the river, and anchored near the *Shamrock*, whose sails were already furled. The town of New London lay a mile away, but the Pequot House loomed up on the bank, flanked by fancy villas set in smooth lawns. The river was crowded with all sorts of vessels. There were trim yachts lying at anchor; there were steam-launches

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puffing hither and thither; there were spidery shell-boats shooting on their way like huge, long-legged insects; and from the bath pavilion floated music. An excursion boat passed by, gay with flags and black with people, and the crowd cheered when the *Lady Clare's* little cannon fired a salute to announce her safe arrival.

Floyd and Mr. Fanshawe were rowed ashore at once, to get their letters and papers which had been sent to the hotel, and they met Chauncey Dearborne in the office. He shook hands with them warmly, and went with them towards the bar-room.

"There is to be the usual Saturday night hop here," he said, "and I suppose you will all come ashore."

"To tread the giddy mazes of the dance?" asked Mr. Fanshawe, with a wry face. "And to wear a stand-up collar and tight boots?"

"No," said Floyd, sharply, "we don't care for junketing; we shall stay aboard the yacht. Come and see us, Mr. Dearborne."

He did not speak very cordially, and he tore open a letter postmarked Dresden. It was a short letter; he glanced over the lines hastily, then re-read them. They told him that his wife was dead, and in accordance with her mother's wish would be buried in Dresden. He looked at the date, and made a rapid mental calculation. His wife had been in her grave a fortnight. His hand trembled, and he turned away from his companions; he stood for a few seconds with his head bowed; the muscles about his mouth twitched, and his lips quivered. He lifted the letter, and strove to read it again, but there was a mist be-

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fore his eyes, and the written characters ran together on the white page. His face flushed; he stood irresolute, then tore the letter slowly, and crammed the pieces deep into his pocket.

"No bad news, I hope?" said Mr. Fanshawe.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Surprising news," he answered. He bade the bar-tender give him a glass of whiskey, which he drank off, and as he stood the glass on the counter, he said, lightly, "Didn't somebody say there was to be a hop here to-night? I suppose we can't keep the ladies out of it?"

"Not one lady of my acquaintance," said Mr. Fanshawe, significantly.

They had found the bar-room deserted, but a stout, bald, consequential little man sauntered in, and looked about him. He had a yellow mustache, which he twirled upward with a pudgy, white hand, and laughed. He had an unpleasant, cackling laugh, and Chauncey turned around when he heard it.

"Oh, Joe," he said. "You here?"

"How de do, Mr. Floyd?" said Mr. Pelham, holding out two short fingers, and staring at Mr. Fanshawe.

"How are you, Pelham?" was Floyd's unceremonious greeting. He eyed him contemptuously as he spoke. "Trying to yacht it, eh? Been sea-sick?"

"Not a bit of it, got my sea-legs on," said Mr. Pelham. "We beat you up the river, didn't we? Have you bought the *Lady Clare?*" And he cackled again.

"No, she belongs to Somers still. He only lent her to me for a fortnight."

"Then I suppose I can say that she is a clumsy tub."

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Floyd laughed ironically. "In a gale of wind, I would rather be in her cabin than in the *Shamrock's*," he said. "Come, Fanshawe."

He turned his back on Mr. Pelham and Chauncey, and strode away with Mr. Fanshawe.

"What women has he got along?" Mr. Pelham asked his brother-in-law, and leering in a knowing way.

"No women," Chauncey answered, savagely. "Ladies." He turned his back on Mr. Pelham too, and walked out of the hotel, jumped into a waiting hack, and ordered the man to drive him to New London. When he reached the *Shamrock* late that afternoon, he found no one on deck save his sister, who sat in a shaded nook, writing a letter to her mother.

"What have you in those boxes?" she said, smiling upon him.

"Roses," he answered, "but they are not for you."

"I did not suppose they were," she rejoined, still smiling.

"Nor for Miss Herbert either," he said.

"Are you going to wear roses in your hair?" she asked. "Or are they for Fitz and Joe?"

"They are for Miss Lester and Mrs. Fanshawe," he said. He beckoned to a sailor. "Take these over to the *Lady Clare*, and be careful how you handle them."

The impecunious prince bestowed a silver dollar on the sailor, and watched him row off to the *Lady Clare*, which lay a little way down the river. Mrs. Pelham pretended to go on writing for awhile, but finally she called her brother to her. "Now, Chaun-

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cey," she said, "are you going to be rude to Miss Herbert and me this evening?"

"I had not intended to be," he answered. "Suppose I ask if you are going to be rude? Will you make Miss Lester's acquaintance and Mrs. Fanshawe's? They are my friends."

"I know Mrs. Fanshawe as well as I want to," she replied, "and I could not make the acquaintance of a girl like Miss Lester, who is willing to go off yachting with Oliver Floyd. Joe would not allow me."

Chauncey burst out laughing. "Joe would not allow you!" he repeated. "Oh, Mildred, how can you talk such stuff to me? Well, get Joe to forbid you if you want to. If he says anything to me about it I will drop him in the river. You had better tell him so. Exercise your marital authority. Put him in cotton wool for a day or two if you want to preserve him."

"You are brutal!" exclaimed Mrs. Pelham, her eyes flashing.

"I dare say I am," he said, walking away from her.

She re-opened her letter and added a postscript at fever heat.

"I must take back all I have said of Chauncey," she wrote, "for since Miss Lester has arrived on the scene he has suddenly become an abomination. Oliver Floyd's yacht lies anchored near ours, and Chauncey has just sent over a quantity of flowers to Miss Lester. Last evening he sat up on deck with Miss Herbert and whispered to her, and I think

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it would have resulted in an engagement if this Lester woman had not suddenly appeared. Of course she has followed him. It is an easy matter to follow a party such as ours. I could cry with anger. There is to be a hop at the hotel to-night, and I suppose he will desert Miss Herbert. What will she think? She is so fastidious."

Mrs. Pelham had got to the end of the page, so she stopped short in her scribbling and scrawled her initials in the corner. The letter was addressed and stamped, and sent off to her mother at once. Then she went below, and made so careful a toilet that dinner had to be begun before she was ready to appear. She came out at last, dressed simply enough it seemed to the men, but women would appreciate the gown, and know that it came from a most famous Paris house.

"The Swanevelts are here," said Mr. Pelham. "Old lady and her benjamin — what's his name? You know him, Chaunce?"

"Yes, I know him. Corry, I suppose you mean."

At the name of Swanevelt Mrs. Pelham pricked up her ears. She knew Mrs. Swanevelt very slightly; she longed to know the august dame better, for she ruled over the circle that Mrs. Pelham longed to enter.

"I wonder if she will be at the hop to-night," she said, pensively, and her brother, who read her thoughts, drew down his mouth in a sneer.

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Chapter XIX.

"The children have the floor until nine o'clock," said Floyd, who knew hotel customs. "We don't care to see the youngsters dance, do we?" He looked at Carol as he spoke. She wore ivory white, and Chauncey's roses were on her breast. "Where did the flowers come from?" he asked.

"Mr. Dearborne sent them. He sent some to Mrs. Fanshawe and me."

"But mine are only crumbs from the rich woman's table," added Mrs. Fanshawe.

"You remember what Cinderella lost?" said Floyd. "I found it."

"Oh, then you are the prince," murmured Mrs. Fanshawe, significantly. He gave no heed to her, but turned to Carol. "I had an idea that I should bet with you and lose, and—"

"You knew the *Shamrock* could beat," she exclaimed, reproachfully.

He opened a box, and displayed a pair of slippers with old-fashioned silver buckles wrought to form the letters C. L.

"Why was I born so dull?" said Mr. Fanshawe, piteously. "Dearborne thinks of flowers, Floyd of foot-gear, and I—"

"You think of baking-powder and me," said his wife, soothingly.

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Floyd knelt down before Carol and took off the low shoes she wore and put on the new slippers. As he fastened the buckles, a lock of his thick, iron-gray hair fell over his forehead; his face flushed and he pressed his lips together.

"Well," he said, glancing up at her.

"They are very pretty." She put her head on one side and looked down at them. "Thank you. But you knew the *Shamrock* would beat."

"The *Shamrock* is good for a summer day," he said. He still knelt before her, and he spoke very slowly. "With a clear sky and a light breeze the *Shamrock* is all that one could wish. But this old boat has weathered storms; she can carry you safely through a gale; she is to be depended on; she is tried and true, while the *Shamrock* is—" he broke off and looked at Carol.

"Is that an allegory?" asked Mrs. Fanshawe, flippantly.

"It is the truth," he replied, rising to his feet and shaking back the lock of hair.

Carol scrutinized her slippers, her head still a little on one side, her hands clasped lightly in her lap. Without apparent cause the telltale color mounted slowly to her cheeks, and she avoided meeting the eyes that she was sure were watching her.

"I should like to see the children dance," she said at last; and so it happened that the party from the *Lady Clare* reached the long hotel parlors early in the evening.

Around the walls sat proud mothers, watching

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their boys and girls on the floor. A few young ladies hovered near and wished that the children would go off to bed; but the children showed no signs of sleepiness. They walked demurely through quadrilles, they waltzed, they fanned, or allowed themselves to be fanned, and behaved precisely like their elders. One dark-eyed girl, who could not have been seven years old, was clearly the belle, and she graciously gave a rose to a favored cavalier of ten. All the mammas murmured "how sweet," and Floyd remarked that the babies began it very early. He had installed Mrs. Fanshawe and Carol in a vacant corner—the only vacant corner, indeed. Presently a lady of perhaps sixty entered the room, crossed it majestically, and seated herself not far from Carol. She was dressed in black velvet, and a single diamond flashed at her throat. She was large-boned, coarse-skinned, and her hair was the ugly gray that yellow hair turns, but there was a dignity and grace about her that made her appearance pleasing. Moreover, her face was tranquil, and when she smiled, her whole countenance lighted up. Everybody looked at her, but no one spoke to her. There she sat in solitary grandeur until a young man approached her, who said, apologetically,

"I forgot all about you, mamma."

"You are a bad boy," she said. "Sit down and devote ten minutes to me now."

He took her fan, and while he plied it to and fro, he stared about the room with a somewhat vacuous expression. Soon there appeared in the door-way Mrs. Pelham and her train.

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"Look yonder, mamma," said the young man, and the old lady put on her eye-glasses.

"I hope they won't come near me," she said in disgust.

But Mrs. Pelham did come near her; she came directly towards her, passing Mrs. Fanshawe with a nod, and she said, suavely,

"Good-evening, Mrs. Swanevelt."

Mrs. Swanevelt bowed, but she frowned when her son arose.

"There is Chauncey Dearborne," he exclaimed. "I haven't seen him in a year;" and he went across the room to Chauncey, leaving Mrs. Pelham to seat herself in the chair he had just quitted. She looked all about the room, and scrutinized Carol with polite severity; then turned towards Mrs. Swanevelt, who was visibly vexed because her son had deserted her.

"How pretty it is to see the children dance," she ventured to remark.

"They ought to have had their bread-and-milk and been in bed an hour ago," was Mrs. Swanevelt's response.

The children were borne away after awhile, two or three showing fight and refusing to stir, and several were carried off the field in their stalwart nurse's arms. One yellow-haired angel kicked and bit so vigorously that she was permitted to stay until it pleased her to retire. The leader of the band raised a trumpet to his lips, and blew a call that brought young men and maidens to the parlors in a trice; then the first bars of a waltz were played, and Chauncey walked at once to Carol. She rose, although he had not ut-

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tered a word—he had not even bidden her good-evening, and it was not until they had waltzed to the end of the parlor that he spoke to her.

"And you are enjoying yourself?" he said, as they paused.

"Now?" she asked. He took her fan, and studied the carved handle for a second before he made reply.

"Well, yes, now."

"I like to dance," she answered. "And I like to dance with you. We go well together, although I am sure I don't know why. We learned in different schools."

"I think I could tell you," he said.

"It is not the time for theories," she rejoined. "This waltz takes me back to Berlin. Many is the time I have danced to it with lieutenants whose spurs and swords jingled jangled in time with the music. And the spurs and swords always became entangled in my dress—"

"Ah, the lucky lieutenants," said Chauncey, raising his eyebrows and shaking his head. "Come," he added, "you remember what poor old Mr. Vaughn said—

'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.'

We ought not to be standing here while they play such a waltz."

"You really like to dance," she said, looking at him critically. "I should have thought that you would hate it—despise it."

"You have a queer notion of me," he said. "You think I am a prig, or a pedant, or both. Yes, I do like to dance. Come."

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He would have gone on dancing with her until the band stopped playing, but she soon asked him to take her back to Mrs. Fanshawe. Then Floyd claimed her, and Chauncey leaned against a door-post and watched her. Finally, he crossed to his sister's side, and asked in a whisper if she would make Miss Lester's acquaintance, but Mrs. Pelham promptly shook her head. He turned and spoke a few words to Mrs. Swanevelt, and was about to walk away when Corry laid hands on him, and begged to be introduced to the young lady who was dancing with Oliver Floyd. Chauncey complied, and Corry presently led Carol out, and walked through a quadrille with her. After he had left her safe beside her chaperon, he approached his mother hastily.

"Who do you suppose that young lady is?" he said. "It is Carol Lester—Jack Lester's sister."

"Ah!" Mrs. Swanevelt exclaimed. "Now I know why her face is so familiar! She looks just as her mother did forty years ago. Go bring her here, Corry."

Corry brought Carol to his mother, who greeted her warmly, even while she reproached her.

"I thought you would follow your aunt's example, and stay in Berlin," she said, finally. "Why did you not let me know that you were in America? Are you only over for the summer?"

"We are living here," Carol answered, "at Newbroek. We have Jack's little girl with us."

"Yes, yes, I know; I heard," said Mrs. Swanevelt, hastily. She looked at Carol with a smile. "You have forgotten me," she went on, "but I can remember you when you were a baby. You have grown

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very like your mother. Oh, I have a great deal to say to you! Why didn't you look me up long ago? and all your mother's friends? You will have to make amends some day for your neglect. And so you are living at Newbroek? My daughter, Mrs. Forbes—do you remember her?—she has a place not very far from there, and I shall spend the autumn with her, and then I expect to see something of you and Mrs. Milinowski. But can't you come and lunch with me to-morrow?"

Mrs. Swanevelt talked and asked questions until Floyd came up and claimed Carol. She knew Floyd, and she rallied him on his unwonted gayety.

"I thought that you had become a misanthrope," she said to him. "Miss Lester tells me you are yachting—you and your friends. Now mind you send Miss Lester to lunch with me to-morrow."

Mrs. Pelham had heard every word, and she beckoned her husband to her, and went with him for a stroll up and down the wide piazza.

"Have you met Miss Lester?" she asked.

"Didn't you tell me not to mention her to Chauncey?" he retorted. "What's the matter with the girl? She is handsome, she dresses well, she behaves well, and yet you are awfully down on her. I heard Corry Swanevelt tell Chauncey that he had known Miss Lester when she was a little girl—her mother was a friend of his mother's, and so on and so on."

"But for all that, they talk about her dreadfully up in Newbroek," said Mrs. Pelham, "and mamma is terribly afraid Chauncey may marry her. Mamma is making a mistake."

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"You had better tell her so," her husband rejoined, and straightway went off to speak to his brother-in-law, whom he found leaning against the door-post, that refuge of every shy young man. He tapped Chauncey lightly on the shoulder, and Chauncey scowled and shook the shoulder whereon Mr. Pelham's pudgy fingers had rested. Then Mr. Pelham leaned against the other door-post and surveyed the dancers in silence.

"That Miss Lester is a lovely girl," he remarked.

Carol was walking through a quadrille with Floyd, and she smiled once or twice at Chauncey in a friendly way.

"I wish you would introduce me to her," Pelham added.

His brother-in-law glanced at him, and drew down the corners of his lips.

"Has Mildred given you leave?" he said.

Mr. Pelham bit the end of his mustache. He was not wise enough, however, to hold his tongue.

"You are infernally disagreeable," he retorted. "Come, Chaunce," he continued, in the patronizing tone that Chauncey always resented, "I understand all about this little matter, and I want to help you out of it. I have been talking it over with Mildred, and I have convinced her that her mother's prejudices against a certain lady are unfounded, unjust."

"Humph," growled Chauncey, "Mildred was the one who put most of the unfounded ideas in my mother's brain. No, sir," he exclaimed, "if you and Mildred want to make Miss Lester's acquaintance,

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you can make it, but I will not help you. Get Mrs. Swanevelt."

Then Chauncey went out on the piazza and smoked a cigar in a fury. There he met Mr. Fanshawe, who was in a doleful frame of mind, for he hated dancing, he hated his dress clothes, he hated lights and music and confusion. These two walked together awhile, and Mr. Fanshawe grew confidential. He had sent a telegram to his partner, telling that partner to send a telegram in return, informing Mr. Fanshawe that he was needed at home.

"I can't get away to save my soul," he said, piteously. "My wife enjoys this sort of thing, but I loathe it. The telegram will settle the matter, though. And I don't like to see Oliver Floyd making love to Miss Lester."

"Making love to Miss Lester?" Chauncey cried.

"Yes, I am not a fool. Either she does not know he has a wife, or else she don't care, or perhaps the wife is dead. I don't know, but I know I am sick of all this, and I am going home to-morrow."

"So am I," said Chauncey. They both forgot that the next day would be Sunday; but they made the discovery when they went into the office to look at a time-table. There were no trains, and Mr. Fanshawe gnashed his teeth in rage, while Chauncey walked away and strolled down to the water's edge. He found somebody to row him out to the *Shamrock*, and he hastily collected his effects, crammed them into a portmanteau, and returned to the hotel, where he secured an attic room for the night. Then he waited on the piazza for the music and dancing to cease.

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He stepped forward when Carol came out, wrapped in a long white cloak and leaning on Floyd's arm.

"Good-night," he said.

"Good-night," she returned. "Come and see us to-morrow. But you are the host," she added, looking up at Floyd.

"Mr. Dearborne knows he will be welcome," said Floyd, stiffly.

The Fanshawes followed close, and Mr. Fanshawe said in a hoarse whisper,

"I have received a telegram from my partner. Important business calls me home. Ha, ha!" and he chuckled in delight.

"Ass!" murmured Chauncey to himself.

He shrank back in the shadow again and waited for his sister. She came at last, and he told her that he must bid her good-night and good-bye.

"Very well, Chauncey," she said, "do as you please; but you cannot leave New London to-morrow, unless you take the night boat, and you will have time to come to the yacht and make your adieux to Joe and Miss Herbert. You have been rude to both of them —rude enough."

"I admit it," he said, humbly. "And I will come to the yacht to-morrow. I shall ask a favor of you, Mildred."

"What is it?" she asked, her woman's curiosity aroused.

"I can't tell you now," he answered. "Good-night."

He tried to steal away to his room, but his path was beset, first by one acquaintance, then another, and

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finally Corry Swanevelt waylaid him, and began to talk about Carol Lester; but when Corry mentioned Floyd's name, he interrupted him and bade him a hasty good-night. He climbed to his tiny attic chamber, and seated himself astride a chair that stood near an open window. Below him lay the river and the fleet of yachts with their colored lights. There was the *Shamrock*, yonder the *Lady Clare*, the lanterns on the masts gleaming out like great eyes. He lighted a cigar, and the combined sedative powers of the sweet tobacco and the peaceful summer night calmed his spirit, and sent him to bed and to sleep.

Breakfast was served so late aboard the *Lady Clare* that it was not quite over when Chauncey entered the cabin on Sunday morning. He accepted a cup of coffee, and while he drank it, Mrs. Fanshawe told him that her husband had received a telegram bidding him come home. "And so I must go too," she concluded.

"And I," said Carol.

"And, therefore, I," echoed Floyd. He rose from the table and took his hat. "'*Eh, gai, gai, gai, de profundis!*'" he hummed under his breath. "Come, Madam Fanshawe," he continued, "we must go on deck and see what manner of day it is. Mr. Dearborne, as the Spaniards say, the yacht is yours." He made a low bow and gave Mrs. Fanshawe his arm. Mr. Fanshawe followed them, first bestowing a monstrous wink on Chauncey, and murmuring, with a sad shake of his head,

"You're a lucky dog; you have no business cares."

"But for all that," Chauncey said to Carol, "I am going back to New York to-night."

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"We shall leave on Monday," she said. "What takes you home so suddenly, if I may ask?"

"Oh, you may ask me anything. The fact is, I am going to Europe this fall, to be gone a year or two—at least I suppose I shall go."

"*Bon voyage*," she said.

He looked at her wistfully. "I wish you would tell me that you would miss me a little."

"Indeed I shall miss you. Who will ride with me? who will go to the tennis club with me? I shall be afraid to go to the tennis club alone, now that poor Penelope Vaughn no longer comes. I stand a little in awe of Miss Yelverton and Mrs. Thorpe and Miss Douglass, and the rest. They don't like me. There is suspicion in their eyes. What lures you away from Newbroek?"

"Nothing could lure me away," he answered.

"And surely nothing could drive you away," she returned.

He rose impetuously and came near her. "Carol, tell me to stay," he exclaimed. She raised her hand as if to warn him, but he caught it and held it in his own. "You know that I love you; I don't need tell you that. It is for you to say whether I stay or go."

His hold on her hand tightened as he waited for her to speak. "I don't dare tell you to stay," she said, "and I cannot bear to tell you to go. Oh, Chauncey, wait a little while—wait until I learn to know myself better. You think me very weak?" She looked into his face with an appealing smile.

He shook his head. "Not so weak as I am," he

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said. "You do not understand me, do you? I will tell you when I see you in Newbroek; I will tell you—oh, how can I ever tell you?"

He started up, and she rose and laid her hand on his arm. "I want you to be honest with me," she said, gently. "I believe in you, I trust you; and I am sure that whatever it is you must tell me is nothing to your dishonor."

He kissed her hand as it lay on his arm. "You are the sweetest woman in all the world," he said. "I wish you could love me a little."

She made no response, and after standing beside him in silence for a minute, she drew back and seated herself again. He had forgotten her; he knitted his brows anxiously and remained standing, his hands clasped behind him, his head bowed.

"Why should I not have told you?" he exclaimed. "You knew it. And—and—" he broke off and looked at her earnestly. "Oh, well," he said, "it can make no difference."

Overhead they heard Oliver Floyd walking about the deck, and humming the little French song, beginning,

"Eh, gai, gai, gai, de profundis!"

"That is all he knows of that song," Carol said, with a constrained smile. "He has been humming it for the last twenty-four hours, but he never gets beyond the first line."

"That," said Chauncey, "is a song of triumph. Béranger wrote it, I think. A widower rejoices because his wife has died—

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'Eh, gai, gai, gai, de profundis!
Ma femme
A rendu l'âme,
Eh, gai, gai, gai, de profundis!
Qu'elle aille en paradis!' "

Carol gave a little shudder. "What a cold-blooded song! I wonder why Mr. Floyd should find it to his fancy?"

"Perhaps," Chauncey began, but he stopped and looked at Carol. Her eyes met his fearlessly and she smiled.

"Perhaps," she said, "Mr. Floyd does not know the rest of the song. I shall tell him he must find another, one suited to a bachelor. Surely Béranger wrote some songs for bachelors."

"Have you known Mr. Floyd long?" Chauncey asked, quickly.

"He has known me a long time," she answered, "but I can hardly remember him before we made acquaintance all over again last winter in London. He was a friend of my brother's—but I told you that. Still, he did not come to our house after my brother went to Europe to live, and I was only ten years old then, so my acquaintance with him must date from last January—the twenty-sixth of last January."

"You have an excellent memory for dates," remarked Chauncey.

"Ah, I remember that one," she exclaimed. "You are not a woman; you don't know how helpless a woman can feel, and how grateful she is when some friend comes and gives her a hand. So Mr. Floyd came to us. He had not seen my aunt since he was

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a boy; he had known me only as a child, but for my brother's sake he befriended us."

She spoke warmly and her eyes flashed. Chauncey rose and looked about for his hat, which had fallen to the floor, and he searched for it a minute, but when he found it he only stroked it and stared blankly at the lining. "Carol," he said, but she stopped him.

"Not now," she exclaimed. "There is something you ought to tell me; you confess that, and before you go any further, before you can expect me to listen to you, I must know what it is that you yourself say I should know."

"You are quite right," he answered, "quite right. I ought not to have spoken—"

"Oh, I will forget it all if you wish," she exclaimed.

"You cannot forget it," he returned. "I tell you again—I love you. At least, there is no reason why I should not tell you that."

Carol turned, and without a word led the way towards the deck, and Chauncey followed her. He sat silent, listening to the talk, but not speaking himself unless he were asked a question. Floyd laughed and chatted; he sparred with Mrs. Fanshawe, he joked with her husband, and he rallied Carol on her conquest of old Mrs. Swanevelt.

"I wish we had the New York papers," said Mr. Fanshawe, discontentedly. "The blue laws of this State are enough to madden a man."

"They are not responsible for the lack of New York papers," Floyd rejoined.

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"I don't see why you are so eager for the papers," Carol said, with a little scorn. "I don't read one twice a month."

"I always look at the deaths," said Mrs. Fanshawe, seriously.

"But if our friends die," Carol returned, "we don't want to learn of it from a newspaper."

Chauncey rose. "I must bid you good-morning," he said. He shook hands with each one formally, and then was rowed to his brother-in-law's yacht, the *Shamrock*. He sought his sister, and found her in the seclusion of her own cabin, where she lay on a couch, reading a novel. She greeted him coldly, and bade him be seated.

"Well," she said, "since you have plainly told me that you don't care for my society, I suppose you have come to ask your favor. What is it, Chauncey?"

"It is hardly a favor," he said. "It is an act of justice I want you to perform. You must write to mother, and take back all you have said against Miss Lester. You know now who she is."

"How do I know?" Mrs. Pelham asked.

"She is Mrs. Swanevelt's friend," he answered. "I should think that would satisfy you."

Mrs. Pelham opened her novel and smiled. "It does not do away with the fact that she has carried on a shameless flirtation with Oliver Floyd. However, I don't care anything about her. Marry her if you want to."

"Marry her?" he repeated. "I? I, without a penny in my pocket?"

"You may not have a penny in your pocket," she

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returned, "but you have several dollars, I don't doubt. You ought to go to Texas and start a cattle-ranch. That is what all impecunious young gentlemen do nowadays. They think that the cattle toss up gold on their horns."

"Madame hath an exquisite wit," said Chauncey.

His sister laughed. "However, I shall perform the act of justice, as you call it, and when I see mamma I shall tell her that Miss Lester's mother was a friend of Mrs. Swanevelt's. Are you still determined to go home at once?"

"I have secured a state-room on the night boat," he answered, "and I shall be in Newbroek to-morrow."

"Give mamma my love," said Mrs. Pelham. "Don't forget to say something civil to Joe and Miss Herbert and the rest before you go. We sail for New York to-morrow, and if you decide to be married immediately, send us cards, please. Good-bye."

Chauncey laid his hand on the door, but his sister called him back.

"Come here, you foolish boy," she said. "I don't want to torment you. Really, I am very sorry for you, Chauncey."

"Yes, I am a pitiful object, a poor, miserable cur," he exclaimed; and then he left his sister to read her novel.

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Chapter XX.

It was noon. In Newbroek there was a blowing of factory whistles, a clang of bells, and the streets were full of people who sought the shade and moved along slowly. The sun beat down pitilessly on the pavements and houses until they were hot to the touch. Fat men discarded their vests, flung back their coats, hoisted umbrellas, and carried palm-leaf fans. Soda-water fizzed in every drug store; a flourishing trade went on in ice-cream saloons; and deluded workmen swallowed foaming beer that cooled them for a moment and then left them hotter than ever.

It was on this day that Chauncey came home, and the train reached Newbroek at noon. He was not expected; there was no carriage waiting for him, so he was forced to engage a rickety hack, and bid the driver go to the farm where his mother was staying. The jaded horses jogged slowly along the hot, dusty road, kept to their weary trot only by the whip-lash, and even with that urging them on they were long in traversing the three miles. Chauncey found his mother about to eat her luncheon, and the sight of her sitting there alone in the homely little room filled him with sadness and remorse. He kissed her tenderly, but she only suffered his caress, she did not return it, or did she utter one word of welcome.

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She asked him if he had lunched, and when he answered that he had not, she rose and got a plate for him herself.

"Oh, don't wait on me," he exclaimed. The farmer's wife, Mrs. Thomson, entered, the picture of a clean, cheerful, busy woman. She greeted Chauncey warmly, she asked after his sister, she bustled about and brought him a napkin and a knife and fork, and she left him with the hope that the sea air had given him an appetite.

"They don't feed you very well, mother," he said, as he cut up the chicken. "Is there any claret in the house?"

She shook her head. "You know I don't care what I eat or drink, or whether I ever eat or drink again."

"Mother," he said, gravely, "something troubles you. What is it?"

"You know well enough," she answered.

"It can't be possible," he cried—"it can't be possible that you are worrying yourself into your grave about me!"

"It is possible, Chauncey. It is possible, because I love you, and because I must see you led away by an adventuress, who has nothing to recommend her save her face. It is terrible."

"I am very sorry," poor Chauncey said. "Don't call her an adventuress again, please."

"What brings you home?" she asked.

"I came to see you, mother; I cannot bear to think that I am making you unhappy. I don't want to. I know I have not acted right towards you—but—"

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"But you care more for her than you do for me," she said. "And have you told her?"

"I don't care more for her. It is different. You are my mother; you have been all kindness and tenderness to me, and I am repaying you with brutality. Oh, mother, if you knew her better! At New London she met friends, the Swanevelts, who knew her when she was a child. I do not care for the Swanevelts, but friends of theirs are at least worthy to be friends of ours."

Mrs. Dearborne laughed harshly. "The Swanevelts?" she repeated. "Ah, she is clever, this Lester woman. She has contrived to rake up some friends — friends other than men, friends who are not like her counsellor and protector, Oliver Floyd. Chauncey, she drove down here one evening with that man, and I overheard their conversation. They did not know I was in the next room, and I was forced to listen. Mr. Floyd did not talk as a family lawyer would talk, but she understood him. He sneered at you; he called you Prince Dearborne, one of her satellites, and she laughed, she laughed at you, Chauncey. You do not believe me; you have no faith in your mother; you trust a girl whom a few weeks ago you did not know, and who sneers at you. It is your money, Chauncey, that she is thinking of, not you."

"I have no reason to suppose that she has thought twice of me or my money," he exclaimed, "but I do not believe that she is sordid; I would not believe that. And everybody knows I am dependent on you; everybody knows that I am an idle, visionary, con-

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temptible good-for-nothing. Surely the gossips have taken care that she should not be deceived as regards me; but it can make no difference in my feelings."

His mother looked at him. "Are you ready to make your promise?" she said.

"Are you ready to keep yours?" he returned. "You said you would give me this farm on my birthday, and my birthday comes next month."

Her face hardened. "Go to Europe," she said, "and stay a year, and come back cured of your infatuation."

"I will not go," he answered. "Here I am and here I stay. But I will not burden you, mother. I dare say I can dig or delve or do something. If worse comes to worst, I can break horses for a living. You need not smile; I will not take any money from you under conditions. Please bear that in mind."

"And what will you do?" she said.

"I tell you I do not know, but I cannot eat your bread after this; it would be bitter in my mouth. And I shall tell Miss Lester—"

His mother interrupted him. "Tell her first," she cried, in anger, "that you have no money except as I give it to you, and tell her that if she chooses she can make you a beggar. Then see what answer she will give."

"It will make no difference in her answer," he said. "If she has learned to care for me, whether I were rich or poor, it would make no difference. Yes, I shall tell her the truth. I shall tell her that I was brought up to no trade or profession; I was given everything I wanted; I was led to suppose that I

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never need earn a penny, that I was free to come and go, to travel, to study, to devote myself to any occupation that gave me pleasure, without one thought of possible gain—and then I was ordered to earn my living because I loved her. Yes, I shall tell her."

"If you tell her that," said Mrs. Dearborne, "everything can go on as before."

Chauncey looked at his mother in wonder. "Everything go on as before? Oh no. I could not stay here with you. I am afraid to think how I should feel towards you."

No more was said. They ate the luncheon, and presently began to talk in a constrained way upon indifferent topics. Chauncey went out afterwards to smoke, and he walked to the fields where the men were working. The hot sun beat down on him, but he hardly felt the rays. Towards four o'clock he returned to the house, and asked his mother if her carriage could take him back to town. She gave her consent, and the coachman brought the victoria to the door. Chauncey tossed his portmanteau in, then took his seat, saying, "Good-bye."

"You are not going back to New London to-night?" Mrs. Dearborne asked.

"No," he answered, curtly. "I am going to the hotel. If you want me, send a line to me there—the Trowbridge House."

Mrs. Dearborne watched him until the carriage disappeared. She began to understand that her son was not to be cajoled or threatened; there was nothing for her to do but hold her own firmly or yield utterly. To retreat gracefully was impossible. But

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underlying all her anxiety was her fear that Chauncey would in some way find out about the will, and not only learn that it was invalid as far as he was concerned, but also discover that she knew it, and had kept the truth from him. How could she expect mercy from him—him, to whom she had showed no mercy? how could she expect generosity or forgiveness? It seemed to the distraught old woman that the only thing for her to do was to lie down and die.

She sat on the porch, thinking of it all, until the darkness closed in and the katydids began their monotonous contradiction. From the pond came the cries of the frogs croaking for rain, and the wind freshened, and sighed among the pine-trees. Clouds drifted over the stars; in the west the lightning played, and now and then there was a sullen mutter of distant thunder. Mrs. Dearborne drew her shawl closer, for she felt the night air settling down about her. She tried to rise, but a curious, numb sensation in her limbs made her powerless. In terror she grasped the chair with her nerveless hands, struggled for a second, then cried for help. The farmer and his wife carried her into the house, and laid her on a lounge. She was perfectly calm.

"Thomson," she said, "go and get Doctor Graham and Mr. Chauncey. My son is at the Trowbridge House. Don't alarm him."

Mrs. Thomson brought ice, and put it on Mrs. Dearborne's brow; she knew not what to do. "Do you feel better, ma'am?" she asked, helplessly.

"Yes; it was nothing. Fetch me my Bible. It is in my bedroom."

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Mrs. Thomson obeyed her. "And shall I read?" she asked.

Mrs. Dearborne bowed her head. "You may read; read anywhere."

Mrs. Thomson chose the fourteenth chapter of St. John. She was a fair-skinned, plump, wholesome woman, with a clear, low voice. She read the beautiful words in hushed, reverent accents: "'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions.'"

"I am not going to die," cried Mrs. Dearborne, hoarsely.

Mrs. Thomson took her hand and continued: "'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.'"

Her voice trembled; she bit her lip and tried to read, but could not.

"Give me the book," said Mrs. Dearborne, sternly, and she read to herself, or at least kept the Bible open until a wagon was heard driving into the yard.

"Take the ice away," she said. "Cover me with that shawl." She would make a decent appearance, even in the face of death, and when Chauncey and Doctor Graham entered she greeted them with a smile.

"I am afraid I have given you a great shock," she said. "Did you expect to find me insensible?"

Chauncey's face was white, and he stood by looking sadly at his mother, while the doctor felt her pulse

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and asked a few questions. He sent Mrs. Thomson for hot water, and measured out some medicine he had brought with him; for, from the farmer's hasty story, he had been able to guess what had happened. He stayed an hour or so, and when he left the room, Chauncey followed him out to the hall.

"Well?" he said, anxiously.

"There is no danger," the doctor replied. "A very light attack. It probably will enfeeble her somewhat, but she may live to be a hundred years old. No cause for immediate alarm, but you must see that she is kept calm. Don't let her worry herself. I'll come down early to-morrow."

Chauncey went back to the sitting-room, where his mother lay on the lounge. He took her hand in his and pressed it gently. The tears came to his eyes; he longed to put his head on her bosom as he had when he was a child. A hot tear fell on her hand, and she looked up at him.

"Chauncey, you would be sorry if I died?" she said.

He could not speak; he bent and kissed her brow.

"I have not changed my will," she continued; "you will get your share at my death."

"Hush!" he whispered.

After awhile he asked if he should write to Mildred.

"Yes, write to her," she replied, "but don't ask her to come unless I grow much worse. Treat this lightly."

By-and-by Mrs. Dearborne was carried into her bedroom, and Mrs. Thomson undressed her. Chauncey took up his place at her bedside, and insisted on remaining there, despite his mother's wish that he

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should go to his own room and sleep. He could not sleep; he knew that; he darkened the room, and sat almost motionless during the short summer night, his head lying back against the chair, his eyes staring blankly at the wall. Once or twice he gave his mother the medicine, always finding that she was awake too. So the night wore away, and when the ruddy light began to spread through the eastern sky, Mrs. Dearborne fell into a peaceful slumber.

The next morning, not only the doctor came, but everybody in Newbroek, for the news had flown hither and thither in the darkness, like a bat. There were flowers, notes, messages, and towards noon Mrs. Vaughn and Penelope drove down, both shrouded in crape from head to foot. They asked to see Chauncey, and he met them in the tiny room where Carol and Floyd had once spent a rainy evening.

Mrs. Vaughn's lips trembled as she spoke to him. She asked after his mother, and Chauncey told the story of her sudden illness.

"The doctor assures me there is no danger," he said in conclusion, "but he tells me that she must not be allowed to worry herself about anything."

"I was sure of that," said Mrs. Vaughn. She carried a thick letter which she now gave to Chauncey. It was addressed simply to Mrs. Dearborne, and the handwriting was Mr. Vaughn's. The heavy blot of red wax that sealed it bore the imprint of the letter V. "I found it," Mrs. Vaughn continued, "in one of my husband's coats—his old jacket, which he used often to wear in his study at home. This had slipped down between the pocket and the lining. You must

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give it to your mother when you think best. It probably contains law papers."

"I don't believe it can be of much consequence," Chauncey said.

He went with Mrs. Vaughn and Penelope to the carriage, and returning to the house he put the bulky letter in his own room. He wrote to Mildred of their mother's illness; he wrote also to his brother Lawrence, for despite the doctor's comforting words he feared there was danger. Although it was a blazing hot day, he rode to town himself to post the letters and get the mail, and in Main Street he met Mr. Fanshawe, who stopped him.

"Ah, Dearborne," he said, "I am sorry to hear of your mother's illness. Nothing very alarming, I hope?"

"All illness is alarming," he answered, "but my mother is in no danger, the doctor tells me. When did you get back?"

"Last night. We left Floyd in New York to have a band put on his hat and be measured for a mourning suit." Chauncey stared, and Mr. Fanshawe chuckled. "Haven't looked at the papers for a day or two, have you?" he added. "Mrs. Floyd died a fortnight ago in Dresden. You will see the notice of her death if you look for it. I guess everybody has read it except Miss Lester, and she never reads the papers; but Floyd will break the news to her. He is a queer chap; I couldn't tell whether he had heard the news or not, and I didn't exactly like to ask him. Good-morning." And Mr. Fanshawe strolled on down the street.

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Chauncey was riding his chestnut, and the quick fall of the horse's feet on the cobble-stones seemed to ring out mockingly—

"Eh, gai, gai, gai, de profundis!
Ma femme
A rendu l'âme,
Eh, gai, gai, gai, de profundis!
Qu'elle aille en paradis!"

He struck the horse a sharp blow, forced him into a run, and shot up Verplanck Avenue like an arrow from the bow. When he halted at the cottage, Carol came out on the porch to see him, giving him her hand before he dismounted.

"And your mother?" she said.

He looked at her blankly. "My mother?—oh, she is quite well, thank you. No, no! I mean that she is not dangerously ill." He struck his forehead with his hand as he spoke. "I don't know what I am saying," he added. "I am losing my reason, I believe."

Mrs. Milinowski came out, and commanded him to enter the house.

"You look very warm," she said. She and Carol wore cool white gowns; the door of the cottage stood open, disclosing the shaded hall and the pretty dining-room beyond; the curtains at the windows fluttered in the faint breeze; an atmosphere of rest and peace pervaded the whole picture.

"I cannot come in," Chauncey said. "I only stopped to bid Miss Lester welcome home."

She looked up at him with an entreating smile.

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"And you are not going to leave Newbroek?" she asked.

"No, no; I shall stay here," he answered. "At least, for the present."

"I think you act wisely," said Mrs. Milinowski. He glanced at her quickly, but there was no hint lurking in her eyes. "I mean," she explained, "that there is no place like home."

And then Chauncey burst out laughing, and told her that he agreed with her. After he had gone on, after he was well down the River Road, he drew one of the New York papers out of his pocket and looked over the columns hastily. He saw the notice of the death of Oliver Floyd's wife. It was true then; there could be no mistake. A crow winging his way towards a dead tree cawed at him in scorn. The black bird of ill omen sang the song too—

"Eh, gai, gai, gai, de profundis!"

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Chapter XXI.

Mrs. Pelham telegraphed to Chauncey that she would be in Newbroek on Wednesday noon, and he went to the station for her himself. Travel never left a trace on Mrs. Pelham; no dust clung to her, her dress neither became rumpled, nor her equanimity disturbed, and she greeted her brother always with the same patronizing nod, whether she had seen him the day before, or whether months or years had elapsed since they had met. This calm demeanor is as often irritating as it is soothing, and when his sister took a seat beside him in the carriage on Wednesday, Chauncey had an unreasonable desire to shake her self-possession if he could. She asked after her mother, and he told her what he had already written. She looked at him critically.

"You have aged ten years since you left New London," she said.

"I have been sitting up with mother," he answered.

"Is she really no worse than you pretend?"

"The doctor is my authority. She does not seem very ill, but, Mildred, I believe her brain is affected."

"Because she won't let you marry Miss Lester?"

"I have not asked her permission," he said. "Moreover, I beg that you will not mention Miss Lester's name to me."

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"Aha!" said Mrs. Pelham. "But don't be vexed with me, Chauncey. I shall make a point of calling on Miss Lester before I leave Newbroek, and perhaps I can reason mamma out of her prejudices."

"You may do what you please," he said, more gently. "It makes no difference to me."

Mrs. Dearborne greeted her daughter with a laugh.

"Now, Mildred, what in the world did you come for? I have an excellent nurse. When Chauncey starts out to seek his fortune, I advise him to go into a hospital. To-morrow I mean to get up."

"Can you walk?" asked her daughter, anxiously.

"Walk? Yes, I can walk, if I have some one to steady me. I shall not lose the use of my legs yet awhile."

It galled her to think that she was considered helpless.

"I don't know what you are going to do here, Mildred," she said. "It is very warm; the roads are dusty. I hope you brought some novels to amuse yourself with, for I need very little attention, and time will hang heavy on your hands."

"Mother," cried Mrs. Pelham, in genuine distress, "don't you believe that I want to be with you when you are ill?"

"Yes, child, I do," said Mrs. Dearborne, gently. "Come here, and sit down. Has Chauncey gone out?"

"He is up in his room. He looks far worse than you do, I can assure you."

Mrs. Dearborne gave an impatient movement, and asked her daughter to lower the window-shade. They

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talked about a thousand things—about the weather, about the summer that was fleeting by so quickly, and at last Mrs. Dearborne spoke of Chauncey. She dwelt on his infatuation bitterly, and vowed that not a penny of hers should go to the support of that scheming girl who had beguiled him.

"Mamma," Mrs. Pelham said, "we have made a mistake. Miss Lester's mother was a friend of Mrs. Swanevelt."

"Who cares if she was?" Mrs. Dearborne exclaimed in scorn.

"I do," her daughter answered. "There is no one in New York like Mrs. Swanevelt."

"Mrs. Swanevelt is nothing to me," cried Mrs. Dearborne. "I have watched this Miss Lester; I understand her. And if Chauncey would listen to reason, he would wait at least a year before he married her. I urged him to travel for a year, and he almost promised that he would; but when he came back from New London, he told me plainly that he was determined to stay here. I know what that means."

"So do I," said Mrs. Pelham, significantly. "Oliver Floyd's wife died awhile ago, and Chauncey is afraid to go away."

"His wife is dead?" Mrs. Dearborne repeated. "Then perhaps he will marry Miss Lester. He ought to, I am sure."

Mrs. Pelham expostulated; she pleaded for Carol, she pleaded for Chauncey, but her mother grew stubborn and refused to listen.

"Chauncey knows where he stands," she said, curt-

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ly. "He will find out that I can be firm. And why should he marry any one yet for ten or twelve years? I want him with me."

"You cannot keep him," said Mrs. Pelham.

She saw that it was useless to try to reason with her mother, and presently she mounted to the bedroom which Chauncey occupied on the second floor. He sat by the table writing a letter, which, as his sister entered, he folded with an air of resolution and slipped into an envelope.

"Chauncey," Mrs. Pelham said, "you might as well talk to the hills as to mother."

"I am not going to talk to her," he said; "I am through with talking."

He ran his hand over his thick hair, and then rose and offered his sister a big willow rocking-chair.

"Sit down," he said, imperatively. "We must arrange matters a little. By her own conduct, mother has driven me from her. She is an old woman; she ought not to be left alone, and I do not see but what you must take care of her."

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"I do not know; I have two or three plans. See those letters? I have not been writing them to amuse myself."

Chauncey smiled. He had two or three plans, indeed, and they were widely diverse. One was to get a position on a scientific magazine, whose editor was a friend of his; this was his pet plan. Another was to become the partner of a man in Western New York, who raised horses for the market. He had made Chauncey's acquaintance on a race-track, and a queer

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sort of friendship sprang up between them. He had more than once urged Chauncey to go into business with him; he had openly said that young Dearborne could train a horse to talk; he treated him with profound respect, and not only sometimes asked his advice, but followed it. Whether this was because he really admired Chauncey, or whether it was because he wanted to sell horses to him, remained to be seen.

His third plan was to join a bachelor uncle, Henry Dearborne, who owned large iron-works in Pennsylvania, and who was absorbed in money-getting. That his uncle would give any heed to his request, Chauncey had not much hope, for Henry Dearborne despised idle fine gentlemen, and thought that his nephews were beneath contempt. Still, Chauncey had written to him, stating the case squarely and asking for any sort of position. He well knew in what esteem his uncle held him and his brother, and he could not persuade himself that there was much chance for him in the Pennsylvania iron-works.

Mrs. Pelham glanced at the letters, then at her brother. "I believe you are in earnest," she said.

"I am in earnest," he returned.

She wished that she could think it a mere boyish impulse on his part, a fleeting fancy that might soon be blown away, this resolve to quit his home and carve a place for himself in the world; but looking at his square jaws, seeing the determined light in his eyes, noting the dogged expression about his mouth, she knew it would be unwise to sneer at him, useless to argue with him, dangerous to oppose him.

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"Do you think it easy to make a fortune?" she said.

"Do you think that I am a double-distilled fool?" he retorted, with perfect good-humor. "I do not expect to become a great merchant or banker or manufacturer, but I do expect to be able to earn a living. I know one thing: that I can break horses, and drive them, and ride them. Of that I am sure."

Mrs. Pelham started. "What, Chauncey, would you be a horse-jockey?"

"Yes, I would be anything—a coal-heaver, an old clo' peddler, but I will not sit at home and whine, and tear my hair."

"Perhaps Joe could help you," she said, cautiously.

"Perhaps," he echoed.

"And Miss Lester has money," she ventured to add, and then Chauncey scowled.

"Miss Lester has nothing to do with it, I tell you," he exclaimed. "She knows nothing about it!"

"Haven't you asked her to marry you?"

"I ask a woman to marry me!" he repeated.

Mrs. Pelham looked at her finger-nails. They were almond-shaped and carefully polished. She was not a little vain of them. "Did you know that Oliver Floyd's wife was dead?" she said, softly.

"Yes, I knew it, and that has nothing to do with it either. Can you understand me when I say that I am going away, simply because I will not be dependent on my mother another day? I shall wait until she is well again—then I shall go. You had better tell her that."

"Why should I tell her?" Mrs. Pelham asked.

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"Because she won't believe me," he answered. "She thinks I am a little excited just now, but that I shall calm down by-and-by, and come to heel as a well-trained pup should. You may tell her whatever you like, only let her understand it fully that I am going away. I am going somewhere or other, it does not much matter the precise spot, but I shall not be in Newbroek at any rate. And mother ought not to be left alone."

"I can't leave my husband and children," said Mrs. Pelham, "and I am sure mother will not come to me, but I shall ask her. I wish you would stay with her, Chauncey."

He shook his head. "I am sorry to go away, now that she has had this attack, but I cannot remain any longer than it is necessary. A hero might be generous and noble enough. I am not a hero; I am not generous; I am not noble."

Mrs. Pelham looked at her brother in admiration; she suddenly arose, kissed him, and left the room, half ashamed of her own weakness. He was puzzled; he could hardly be expected to know that even his sister was only a woman, who, like all the world of women, loved a lover.

He met her an hour later at the dinner-table.

"Well, Chauncey," she said, "I have told mamma of your determination, and she only laughed, of course."

"I am glad she is so cheerful," he remarked with great urbanity. "Did you ask her to spend the coming winter with you?"

"Yes, and the mere idea enraged her. She says

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she will send for Cousin Mary MacElroy, if she wants a companion."

"Let her send for Mary by all means," Chauncey said. "Mary would be glad to come, and she and mother get on well together."

While they had been dining, Buckskin was pawing the road just outside the window, and trying to break loose from the groom.

"Where are you going, Chauncey?" his sister asked, carelessly.

"Oh, for a gallop," he answered. "It is the only time to ride, in the cool of the evening, and Buckskin must be exercised."

As he spoke he tried to button his glove, but his hand trembled a little.

"Come here," said Mrs. Pelham. "Let me button your glove for you."

He stretched out his hand, and she laid her cool fingers on his wrist, then glanced up at his face with an astute smile, and still smiling repeated these lines in an undertone—

"'Ah, sweet strange fruit! the which if any eat
They may no longer keep their lives of old,
Or their own selves unchanged, but some weird change
And subtle alchemy comes which can transmute
The blood, and mould the spirits of gods and men
In some new magical form. Not as before
Our life comes to us, though the passion cool.
No, never as before!'"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I did not suspect you guilty of poetry," he said. "Least of all Mor-

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ris's. Very pretty those lines are, Mildred. Good-evening."

He went out, and leaped on his horse's back. The sagacious brute knew by instinct whither he should go, and he bore his master straight and fast to the cottage, where Leila welcomed him on the porch.

"Oh, Dearborne," she cried, "I am so glad you have come! Aunt Carol and Aunt Milly are shut up in the library, and they won't let me in."

"Poor child!" he said, softly. "*Du arme Kleine!*"

"Did my Aunt Carol teach you to speak German?" she asked.

"She has taught me a good deal," Chauncey answered. He waited on the porch for Carol, and when she came out she was surprised to find him there. She greeted him coldly; she seemed absent and ill at ease. Once or twice he caught her looking at him curiously, as though she were studying him, and she gave an evasive answer when he asked her to ride with him.

"I must tell you," he said, "that I am going to leave Newbroek after all."

"Ah, you have changed your mind," Carol said. "The last time you were here you had determined to stay."

"I don't think I could have said quite that," he returned; "but perhaps I did."

"You propose to travel?" Mrs. Milinowski asked.

"A short distance," he answered.

"That means not quite to the heart of Africa, I suppose," Carol remarked.

"I shall tell you what it means," he said. "I am

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sorry you cannot ride with me to-morrow." He looked at her expectantly, but she did not heed his glance. "Did you go to the tennis courts to-day?"

"No; I told you I was afraid to go — or rather, I don't care to go, since Miss Vaughn does not play."

"I was about to ask if I might not go with you to-morrow," he said, and she disregarded this as she had his glance. Her manner was so cold that it chilled Chauncey, and after lingering an uncomfortable half hour he bade her good-night. He rode home very slowly, and Doctor Silloway, who was driving out of town to visit a patient, overtook him and drew up his roan beside him.

"You haunt me like my shadow in these days," Chauncey said.

"Do I?" said the doctor, with his hearty laugh. "Perhaps because we are always travelling the same road. I suppose you have heard the news?"

"I suppose I shall soon hear it," Chauncey responded.

"That Floyd's wife is dead?" the doctor continued.

"Oh, let her rest in her grave, poor woman. Who cares anything about her? I dare say her husband rejoices. If your roan noses my horse again there will be some kicking done. Any other news, doctor?" he added, unpleasantly.

"None, except that if you had taken my advice, and warned Miss Lester not to hob-nob with the Fanshawes, she would not in all probability have

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gone off yachting with Oliver Floyd; but now, ten chances to one, every lady in town will cut—"

"Ten chances to one you will get my whip over your head," said Chauncey, calmly. The doctor was a prudent soul; he spoke to his horse and trotted away.

When Chauncey reached the farm he entered his mother's room, treading lightly lest he should wake her if she were sleeping; but she heard him, and spoke to him. He bent and kissed her tenderly.

"You are quite comfortable?" he said.

"You could make me more than comfortable if you chose," she answered, softly. "My dear son, it is not so much that I ask of you, only to go away for a year, and learn to know yourself."

"I am going away," he answered. "Mildred told you, did she not?"

"Yes, Mildred told me, but you ought not to leave me."

"I thought you wanted me to leave you," he said.

"But not this way," she exclaimed. "All I have is yours while I live, and when I die you shall have your portion. Don't act foolishly. There is no need of your earning your bread. I cannot bear to have you leave me, Chauncey"—her voice broke, and tears sprang to her eyes—"but for your own good I would have you go; not to work, though, to travel, amuse yourself."

"Mother, I cannot," he exclaimed. "I might, if—"

"If Oliver Floyd's wife had not died," she added,

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quickly. "Do I understand you, Chauncey? You refuse to do as I wish?"

He did not answer at once. "Yes, you understand me," he said. "Don't worry about it, mother. She will not marry me, but I cannot stay here after all that has happened. Lie down."

He smoothed her pillow with his deft, strong hands; then put his arms about her and kissed her lips; but she knew the caress was not for her, and she thrust him from her with an impatient word.

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Chapter XXII.

After Chauncey had ridden away, Mrs. Milinowski and Carol sat in silence for several minutes. Finally the widow spoke.

"I wonder," she said, reflectively, "if that young man has a wife in Dresden?"

"Oh yes," said Carol, "you may be sure that he has a wife in Dresden. It is an excellent place to keep wives."

It is the unexpected that arrives. These women, who rarely looked at a paper, to-day had looked at one, and had seen a short paragraph that astonished them greatly. "And I wonder," Mrs. Milinowski continued, "if Mr. Floyd will go into mourning?"

"Mourning for a wife whom he did not live with —a wife he never spoke of—a wife of whom he must have been ashamed!" Carol spoke warmly. "Oh no, he will not go into mourning. He is glad —I know he is glad that she is dead."

"That is indecent," said Mrs. Milinowski. She paused. "I shall never like him so well again," she added.

"You mean that you will never be able to put faith in him. Neither shall I. He never so much as hinted that he was married. He may have children; he may come here to visit us, and then go and see his daughter or his son."

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"We shall find that out when their deaths appear in the newspapers," said Mrs. Milinowski. "I don't believe he has any children, however."

"I can believe anything of him," Carol exclaimed. "And yet, I dare say Mr. Floyd thought we knew" —she broke off, and her face grew hot. "No, no!" she added, "he could not have thought that of me!"

"Of us," said Mrs. Milinowski, placidly.

"Oh, he ought to have told us," Carol murmured, and then she laughed. "Still, a man would hardly go about with his marriage certificate dangling from his button-hole, as though it were a cotillion favor."

"It would look very odd," Mrs. Milinowski remarked, "and Gustav used to say that a gentleman never should look odd. And Mr. Floyd is a gentleman."

"Oh, a gentleman!" Carol echoed.

She went to her room early that night, and she carried with her the telltale newspaper, which she read from beginning to end, as though any line might hold a startling message for her. She cut out the little paragraph relating to Mrs. Floyd, and laid it away carefully.

"I wonder," she said to herself, "if everybody knew but me."

The next day ushered in the autumn with a cool breeze, and with a haze that dimmed the rays of the too ardent sun. She took her racket that afternoon and went to the tennis courts. Since Mr. Vaughn's death the club had met on the Yelverton lawn, and Mary Yelverton had become the ruling spirit. She greeted Carol with scant civility; Mrs. Thorpe fol-

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lowed her example, and Bertha Douglass, who never forgot that she was descended from the Earl of Douglass and strove to act accordingly, tried to be haughty, and succeeded in being rude. Penelope Vaughn was not there; most of the young men were off shooting or fishing, and Carol fled before the horde of supercilious Amazons. She noticed that people stared at her as she passed along the street; she met Mrs. Yelverton and Mrs. Van Zandt, both of whom bowed to her indeed, but more with their eyelids than with their heads. As soon as she reached home she despatched a note resigning her membership in the tennis club, and the resignation was promptly accepted. Miss Yelverton and Mrs. Thorpe and Bertha Douglass exulted openly, for they declared that Miss Lester's last exploit was unpardonable. The last exploit was going off yachting as Oliver Floyd's guest, and the offence was aggravated by the death of Mrs. Floyd, although why Carol should be held responsible for this no one could exactly explain. Mrs. Fanshawe told her of the dramatic club, which was simply the Elmhill tennis club with a new name.

"I suppose you have been asked to join," she added.

"I have not," Carol answered. "What have I done?" she exclaimed. "I do not care about the dramatic club, but why should Miss Yelverton and her friends turn the cold shoulder to me? They were never cordial; now they are hardly civil."

"My dear, shall I tell you why?" Mrs. Fanshawe said. "May I speak plainly?"

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"That presages something unpleasant; still, I want to hear it. Yes, tell me."

"Well, in the first place, you were given a hint that I was not a desirable friend; you disregarded the hint. In the second place, people— You are a pretty woman, Carol; you excited a good deal of curiosity and a good deal of jealousy. You came here a stranger; your only friend was Oliver Floyd."

"And what of him?" said Carol, with ominous calmness.

Mrs. Fanshawe shrugged her shoulders. "He had a wife, you know. He was married years ago, and his wife left him, nobody ever knew why, but everybody took it for granted that he was to blame. His friendship hurt you, Carol. There, now I have said it. Are you angry?"

"Oh no; I have no reason to be angry. And I suppose the yachting-party was a dire offence."

"A dire offence?—a heinous crime. It did not injure me; but—oh, I wish I had not said all this to you," she exclaimed.

"I must thank you, Mrs. Fanshawe," Carol said. She had been seated on the veranda, and now she rose. She had never looked so tall before to Mrs. Fanshawe; she held her head high, and a scornful smile curled her lips. "I understand now why it is that I am not elected a member of the dramatic club. I have been tried by this most worshipful town and found wanting, because, chiefly, Oliver Floyd had a wife. It is rather amusing, I think. I am not responsible for his wife."

"You do not understand," said Mrs. Fanshawe.

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"I understand perfectly all that you have said, and all that you have implied," Carol answered. "Good-morning;" and she left Mrs. Fanshawe, who straightway drove down to her husband's office and told him what she had done. He scolded her roundly, told her she had acted like a goose, and assured her that Miss Lester never would forgive her.

"But she asked me," said Mrs. Fanshawe, piteously.

"You ought to have fibbed," her husband answered. "Harry, you are old enough to know that. Now go home, and never play the candid friend again as long as you live."

The day after Carol had been enlightened by Mrs. Fanshawe, a carriage swept up to the cottage, and two cards bearing the name of Mrs. Joseph Pelham were carried to the room where Mrs. Milinowski and Carol sat.

"Who is this?" Mrs. Milinowski said. "Pelham?"

"Oh, another explorer," Carol answered. "Another woman come to see how we creatures look in our lair."

"My dear child," said Mrs. Milinowski in expostulation. "Why, I know who it is; it is Mrs. Dearborne's daughter. Go down. I will come in a few minutes."

Mrs. Pelham was very gracious to Carol at the outset, and in a little while grew downright cordial.

"I hoped to make your acquaintance in New London," she said, after the usual preliminary talk was over, "but the opportunity did not present itself, and I do not know if a noisy hotel is the best place for people to meet. Then at the hop you were dancing

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all the time, and I was not acquainted with Mr. Floyd, so I could hardly call on you aboard the *Lady Clare*."

There was a double meaning lurking in her words, and she shot a quick glance at Carol, who lay back in her chair, and did not show by so much as the quiver of an eyelash that she had understood this delicate allusion. She was no longer the pale, helpless girl; she was the self-possessed woman, and she was a match for Mrs. Pelham.

"But are not Mr. Pelham and Mr. Floyd acquainted?" she said.

"In a business way, I believe," Mrs. Pelham answered. "You know Mr. Floyd shunned ladies' society after he made his unfortunate marriage. His wife was a charming woman, I understand. Poor thing! her death must have been a great shock to him, even though he and she were not quite happy together."

Carol bowed her assent. "Death is always a shock," she said, gravely, and lifting her eyes to Mrs. Pelham's face. Then a little pause followed, during which Mrs. Pelham looked down at her gloves, and Carol lazily smoothed a fold in her dress. Mrs. Milinowski entered and was duly introduced.

"I trust Mrs. Dearborne is recovering from her illness," she said, in her blunt, uncompromising way.

"Oh yes, thank you, mamma seems quite herself again," Mrs. Pelham answered. "We were greatly alarmed at first, but it does not appear to have been a very serious attack. My brother Chauncey watches over her still, however; he is a very devoted son.

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They say that a devoted son makes an excellent husband," she added, with a little laugh.

"I am sure Mr. Dearborne would make an excellent husband," said Mrs. Milinowski.

Carol shrugged her shoulders. "He is too young," she said. "Isn't it Shakespeare who writes that a young man married is a young man marred?"

"Shakespeare wrote that out of the depths of his own experience," Mrs. Pelham remarked. "Even Shakespeare was only human, and must have harped a little on his own history." She rose as she spoke. "You must come and call on me in New York," she continued, "that is, if you ever are in town."

"I shall be in New York this winter," Carol answered. "There are many of my mother's friends whom I ought to seek out. I was too young when I left to have many friends of my own."

"Perhaps some of your friends are my friends," quoth Mrs. Pelham, with a smile.

"Perhaps—the Bellamys or the Colemans," Carol began, and broke off when she saw how intently Mrs. Pelham was looking at her. "Do you know them?"

"Oh yes," Mrs. Pelham exclaimed.

"My niece is going to visit Mrs. Swanevelt," said Mrs. Milinowski. "I have not seen Mrs. Swanevelt in years and years," she added, pensively.

"But she will come to see us when she visits Mrs. Forbes, who lives near here somewhere," Carol said, soothingly.

Then Mrs. Pelham left the cottage, feeling that she had not been gracious in vain. Unluckily, the Dow girls were not on duty that day, or the spectacle of

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Mrs. Pelham waving her gloved hand to Carol would have perhaps enlightened them somewhat. It was Miss Carrie Dow's idea that there would be a wedding at the cottage before long, but her sagacious sister shook her head when Miss Carrie suggested that Oliver Floyd would probably be the bridegroom.

"He won't marry her," quoth Miss Melinda, scornfully. "He ain't been here since his wife died. And she don't care; she has got Chauncey Dearborne at her beck and nod nowadays."

Mrs. Mott, who was calling on the Dows when Miss Melinda made this remark, pursed her lips up significantly.

"You know he has no money of his own," she murmured, "and Mrs. Dearborne will never consent to the marriage."

"Of course not!" cried Miss Carrie. "Who is she? Where does she come from? Has she any friends?"

Mrs. Mott shook her head. "They say," she whispered, "that it was Chauncey's infatuation that brought on Mrs. Dearborne's illness. It is a judgment on her. She is a proud woman, a self-righteous woman, a woman who treats her equals like the dirt beneath her feet, and now her favorite child will break her heart. I pity her greatly, but a haughty spirit goeth before destruction—no, no, pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Mrs. Benthuysen now joined the group. She had been in New York the day before on a shopping excursion, and she displayed some bits of silk and cashmere.

"I couldn't match my blue suit," she said, mourn-

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fully, "and the skirt is all worn out, while the polonaise is as good as ever."

"Get a gray skirt," counselled Mrs. Mott. "Have a combination suit, blue and gray."

"Like the one Miss Lester wears," said Miss Carrie, with a giggle.

Mrs. Benthuysen's eyebrows went up.

"Yes, I have heard that actresses and persons of that sort set the fashions," she said, significantly. "But of course they reach us rather modified."

There was a good deal of smug complacency in the "us;" it hinted at the impassable gulf between Mrs. Benthuysen and actresses and persons of that sort.

"She never took the trouble to return my call," she continued, "and I am glad of it. I never put much faith in her, and my husband didn't either, and now people are beginning to have their eyes opened. Mrs. Tom Fanshawe sticks to her yet, but she is only trying to be unlike anybody else, and when she is tired of her, she will drop Miss Lester fast enough."

"I suppose Miss Lester thought I was of no account," chimed in Miss Melinda. "I was an old woman, a nobody, living in a little house, and she could afford to be rude to me. Dear me, I said one day, as innocently as possible, 'were your parents German, Miss Lester?' She fired up like a flash. 'If you come here to pry into my affairs, you had better discontinue your calls,' she said, her face as red as a live coal."

"Her parents, I guess, weren't much," said Mrs. Mott. "Good blood will tell. Look at that Mrs.

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Milinowski — a great, coarse, blowsy woman. But she has the most brazen impudence! She speaks English with an extraordinary accent, and sticks in a German word every time she gets flurried, and yet she calmly says she was born and bred in New York. I always had an idea that she was Miss Lester's mother."

"And where is the mother of the child?" asked Miss Melinda.

"Dead," answered Miss Carrie, solemnly.

There was a silence, and these women exchanged a glance such as Roman augurs are said to have exchanged, a glance full of meaning, and tinged with a smile of pity for the gullible world.

"She is a cunning little thing, any way," said Miss Carrie, a sigh fluttering her withered breast.

"But artful," added her sister.

"Artfulness comes natural," Mrs. Benthuysen said. "Look at Miss Lester. She took in everybody at first, but they are dropping her now. Yesterday, Mrs. Thorpe was in our store, and my husband had a chat with her. Mrs. Thorpe is real bright, you know. Well, Mr. Benthuysen he made some joke about the new dramatic club, and he says, 'What are you going to start with—"Macbeth" or "Hamlet?"' Mrs. Thorpe laughed. 'Oh, no,' she says, 'we are going to open the season with "Still Waters run Deep."' Then Mr. Benthuysen, just for fun, you know, asked what part Miss Lester was to take. 'She is not a member of the club,' says Mrs. Thorpe. 'Oho!' says Mr. Benthuysen, 'not quite deep enough, eh?' He always has a speech like that at his tongue's end. Mrs.

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Thorpe kind o' giggled, and went off, and told everybody she met what he had said."

There was an appreciative titter when Mrs. Benthuysen paused for breath.

"I have nothing to say against Miss Lester," said Mrs. Mott, who was profoundly charitable. "I feel very sorry for the poor, misguided girl. She has never known what it was to have a Christian home and Christian influences. We must not judge her harshly, but we cannot open our houses to her, when she refuses to tell us about herself. There is no one to vouch for her except Mr. Floyd, and his name is tarnished. If there was anybody who would come forward and say, 'I knew Miss Lester; I knew her father and mother. I know she belongs to a worthy family,' why, I would overlook the girl's flighty conduct if there was such a person, a respectable person, I mean, to speak for her."

"Mr. Floyd is her only friend," said Mrs. Benthuysen. "They say that when he was a young man"—Mrs. Benthuysen lowered her voice, and the other dames drew their chairs closer to hear the grewsome tale that could not be told above a whisper. So they whiled away the lovely September morning in sweet converse, and parted to spread abroad the words of wisdom they had heard.

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Chapter XXIII.

Early in September Mrs. Dearborne quitted the farm and returned to the Newbroek house. She seemed quite well, but she yielded to her daughter's wish, and installed Mary MacElroy as a companion. She watched Chauncey from morning until night; he did not go to the cottage; he did not ride or drive; he shut himself up in his room a good deal, and at the table he was grave and silent. One morning he received a letter that he read slowly, then read again. It came from his uncle, Henry Dearborne, and it was a frank, friendly response to the letter Chauncey had sent, asking for a position in the iron-works. Henry Dearborne did not laugh at his nephew, or put him off with evasive words. He told Chauncey that he would be glad to help him, and wound up with an invitation to come and pay him a visit as soon as possible. There was a postscript that was characteristic of the man, and it ran as follows:

"P.S.—I shall measure your resolve somewhat by your promptness."

Chauncey put the letter into his pocket. "I shall go to New York this noon," he said, "and from there on out to Pennsylvania. Uncle Henry wants me to come and see him."

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Mrs. Dearborne was startled by her son's voice. "Uncle Henry?" she repeated. "Why, he lives way beyond Pittsburg somewhere."

"Yes," Chauncey said, "but the train that leaves New York at six will take me through in twelve or fourteen hours. I cannot say when I shall be back. Here is my address;" and he tore off the business heading of his uncle's letter. "There are telegraph-wires even west of the Alleghanies," he added, "and if you want me, send for me."

"I don't want you to go," she said.

"I am sorry for that," he returned.

But he did not leave that noon, for he received a despatch from his uncle, asking him to meet him the next day in New York. They could make the journey to Pittsburg together, and Chauncey was glad of the respite. He spent the afternoon in sorting the papers that were thrown at haphazard in his desk, and among them he found the sealed letter given to him by Mrs. Vaughn. He laid it aside carefully until he had reduced the chaos that reigned in his desk to order; then he took it and tried to find his mother, but she had gone to drive. He did not give the letter to her that evening, for his mind was full of other matters, and he forgot about it. For the first time in many days he went to the cottage after dinner, but he did not run over the lawn and jump the fence. He walked through the gateway up the path, and he hesitated a minute before he rang the bell. He remembered the words of Philippe Gerfaut: "A vingt ans, on se sert encore d'une échelle de corde, cet escalier de service des

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amoureux; à trente, on passe par le grand escalier et par la grande porte."

When Annette ushered him in he did not enter the library where Mrs. Milinowski and Carol sat, but he went into the drawing-room, and asked to see Miss Lester. The lamp on the table was turned down, diffusing a dim light through the room and leaving the corners dark. From his chair he could see the portrait of Colonel Milinowski that hung in the hall, and the face of the soldier, with its fierce mustache, looked askant at him.

Carol kept him waiting for full ten minutes, and when she entered she greeted him formally. She turned up the lamp-wick, and murmured something about Annette's carelessness. She wore a gown that Chauncey had once told her he liked. It was a dull red, and he could have sworn that as he passed by the open door of the library he had caught a glimpse of two ladies in white. Mrs. Milinowski came into the drawing-room now, and she said to Chauncey, "We have not seen you often of late, Mr. Dearborne."

"I have been busy, and I thought, perhaps, that my daily calls had become a sort of infliction. It was pleasant for me to come here, but I did not know that it was pleasant for you."

"It was—very pleasant. We have all missed you, even Leila," Mrs. Milinowski said. "Carol wondered if you had left town. You told us you were going away, and as we did not see you, we came to the conclusion that you must have gone on your travels."

"Without bidding you good-bye!" he exclaimed.

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"That would be poor return for the hospitality you have showed to me. I am going away, however, but not to travel."

"You told me you were going—on one condition," said Carol. She sat some distance from him, and she did not look at him when she spoke.

"Oh, at New London," he returned. And then followed a long pause. "The condition," he said at last, "does not hold good any longer. When I spoke to you, Miss Lester, I hoped that affairs would so arrange themselves that I should be free to do as I liked."

"And are you not free to do as you like?" she asked. Her voice had so strange a tone that her aunt and Chauncey both looked at her.

"Carol," Mrs. Milinowski said, "you did not play tennis to-day, and tire yourself out, did you?"

"I am not a member of the club any longer," she answered. "I have resigned—because I knew that my resignation was wished."

Another long pause followed. "I am sure I do not understand," Mrs. Milinowski said, in a sort of despair. "Carol, you are not well; you have not been yourself for several days. You must send for Doctor Silloway."

"Not for him," Chauncey broke in. "Send for Graham. Silloway is a cur."

"I thought he was your friend," said both ladies at once; but Chauncey shook his head. He did not say a word more about the smiling doctor; but he had already said enough. The conversation went on at a halting pace. Carol hardly spoke, and Chaun-

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cey was forced to talk to Mrs. Milinowski, who never was responsive, and who this evening made a visible struggle to appear interested. At last Carol left her chair in the corner and seated herself near Chauncey.

"Tell us where you are going," she said, "and when you are going." She leaned forward, clasping her hands about her knees, and looked at him anxiously.

"I leave to-morrow," he answered, "but only on a preliminary journey. Later, I shall go out to Pennsylvania, and let a shrewd old uncle of mine teach me how to transmute ore into iron. He wants me for a pupil; he thinks there are hopes that even a professional idler like me may become a man of business, and I am tired of playing the part of gentleman of leisure."

"Ah, Mr. Dearborne," Carol exclaimed, "my friends are a great trouble to me. No sooner do I get them classified than they need classification again."

"Like some specimens that my old professor used to have," he said. "He glued them on a bit of paper, wrote their names beneath, and then the specimens would come to life and disappear in the night, or walk about and get glued to the wrong label. You will have to get a new label for me."

"And a new label for Mr. Floyd," said Mrs. Milinowski. She saw that she had blundered, for Carol's face grew hot and Chauncey's dark, but she had not tact to smooth over her awkward remark. She rose, and made a most palpable feint of searching for something, even going so far as to open the carved cabinet that never was opened. "I am looking for a book I am reading," she said, sternly. "I must have left

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it in the library," and forthwith she beat a retreat. Chauncey rose, held the door back for her, and then closed it gently. He stood for a moment with his hand resting on the knob.

"Carol," he said. She looked up. His voice was grave, and there was a nameless change in his whole manner. He spoke not like a light-hearted man, but like a thoughtful, troubled one. The worry, the perplexity of the past weeks had told on him sorely. They had taken all the joyousness out of his face, all the elasticity from his bearing; and now when he stood before Carol, she saw the great difference in him. He came towards her slowly, and she pushed forward a chair that was beside her, but he did not seat himself at once. He hesitated; he passed his hand over his smooth upper lip and reflected.

"I wanted to see you alone," he added.

"Yes," she returned. "You have something to tell me."

"You know that already. Do you still believe that it is nothing to my dishonor?"

"If I must lose faith in you," she said, "I shall never put faith in any one again."

He took the chair she had offered him, but he did not speak at once.

"You must never lose faith in me, Carol; but I have deceived you," he said.

"You, too?" she cried.

"Oh, my offence is not a grievous one. I deceived you unwittingly; I have deceived myself all along. I sailed under false colors without knowing that they were false. I was a fool, a fool!"

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Carol had brought her needle-work with her into the drawing-room, and she bent down over the embroidered bit of cloth.

"I do not believe you," she exclaimed, suddenly.

"Only a minute or two ago," he went on, "I told you and Mrs. Milinowski a little falsehood, but it does not amount to much—that. You remember I said that I was tired of playing the part of gentleman of leisure. It was not quite the truth. I am not tired of the part; the part has cast me off. I should prefer to be a man of leisure, as it is called, or rather, I should prefer not to be a man of business."

"And do you propose to be a man of business?" she asked. "You have abandoned all your dreams? You no longer care to live down on your farm, and study—study as you told me once you wanted to study?"

"Yes. It may be my obtuseness, but I can see nothing glorious in a scramble after money. And yet I am going down on my knees, and dig for the almighty dollar with all my strength."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because, Miss Lester, I have no money, and I want some," he answered. "Ah, you look at me, and no wonder; but the truth is, I never had a penny in my life that was not given to me. I think that a penny earned would look better in my palm than a penny begged."

"Oh yes," she said. "But I always thought—"

He interrupted her quickly. "You thought that I was a man of independent fortune, did you not? My father left us children nothing; it all went to

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my mother, and she has been very generous to us, but—"

Carol had pretended to go on with her needle-work while he talked, but now she looked up quickly. He drew his chair nearer to her, and their eyes met intelligently.

"You have quarrelled with your mother," she said.

"No, not quarrelled. There is a little misunderstanding; I became conscious of the fact that my allowance came from her, and could be stopped at her pleasure. Do you know, I never thought of that before? The money always seemed to be mine; but once it was mine only when she chose to give it, it grew hateful to me."

"I can understand that," said Carol. Then she held out her hand to him. "I am sorry it has happened," she added.

He took her hand and looked at it thoughtfully; it seemed as though he forgot that it lay in his grasp, and when she drew it away, he did not try to keep it; he did not even lift his eyes to her face. He sat silent and absorbed in his own reflections for a long time. At last he reached out and took her hand again.

"Carol," he said, "I love you. You know that already; you have known it a long time, and I told you of it once; but I could not go away without telling you it again."

He asked for no love from her, he begged for no promise, but he looked at her wistfully.

"Some day," he went on after awhile — "some day I shall come to you again, Carol, and then I—

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I shall have to live on the hope that when I come again you will speak one word to me that I long to hear now."

She made no response; she sat passive, her hand lying in his firm grasp, but she suddenly freed herself from him and rose.

"Chauncey," she said, "does your mother know?"

He understood. "Yes," he answered, "she knows that I love you."

"And therefore is she angry with you? Oh, don't turn away," Carol cried, laying her right hand on his shoulder. "Look me in the face, Chauncey, and tell me the truth." Then she laid her left hand on his other shoulder and gazed down at him. "Ah, you need not tell me," she exclaimed. "I can see it in your eyes."

She stepped back from him quickly, but he sprang up and caught her hand.

"Listen to me," he said.

"No, I will not listen to you, unless you will tell me what your mother has against me. What have I done that I should be pointed out as I pass along the street? Why do people, who a few months ago welcomed me warmly, now hardly recognize me? And your mother—she does not know me, and yet she would rather never see her son again than have him care for me."

Carol's voice quivered with passion, and the hot blood mounted to her cheeks.

"Shall I tell you who has made the mischief?" Chauncey said. "Shall I name the hound who wormed himself into your confidence, who played

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the friend, and merged the part into the lover's, although he knew full well that by so doing he insulted you?" Chauncey spoke angrily, but his voice softened. "And, Carol, you never knew; I could not tell you that he was a man who was unfit to be your counsellor, your trusted friend. He deceived you—of that I am sure. If I ever see him I shall tell him that he is too mean a creature for a man to punish."

"You are speaking of Mr. Floyd?" she said, reseating herself.

"Of him," Chauncey answered.

"Then you are speaking of a man who has rendered me many services. I am grateful to him for what he has done, and I will not permit any one to say a word against him in my hearing."

"You do not love him?" said Chauncey. "You must not." He came a step nearer, and his voice grew gentle again. "Carol, I know that I can make a place for myself in the world. I have the chance now, and I shall not throw it away. I can work; I can learn. Tell me that you will trust me; tell me that you will be my wife. Tell me that you will remember me with a little kindness."

"Would it be kindness for me to say Yes?" she answered. "Would it be kindness for me to be a stumbling-block in your path? But for me you need not have given up all your hopes and ambitions"—her voice broke. "No," she said.

"And Floyd?" he asked.

"You have no right to question me; you shall not speak ill of him to me."

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"I have told you the truth," Chauncey said. "Don't be vexed with me. I must go away so soon."

"Not because of me," she exclaimed. "Tell your mother she has nothing to fear from me. Even if I did care for you a little, I could not make a beggar of you."

"You could make me the richest of men," he said. And then he forgot everything except that he loved her and must win her; but she would not listen to his pleading; she was unmoved, cold, defiant, and at last she bade him leave her. He went out blindly; he walked down the road, on and on in the darkness, the cool wind blowing against his hot face, and the rustling leaves murmuring in his ears.

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Chapter XXIV.

"And are you going to New York to-day?" Mrs. Dearborne said, when Chauncey came into her room the next morning.

"Yes; I telegraphed Uncle Henry I would be there. I may go on to Pittsburg with him at once, or I may return home to-night. It will be as he thinks best. You know my resolve is taken. I shall go to work; I shall try to do what other men are trying to do, make money." He spoke dispiritedly. He had not slept, and his face was haggard. His mother looked at him yearningly.

"Oh, Chauncey," she said, "why do you persist in making yourself and me so wretched?"

His lips parted in a mirthless smile. "It is feminine logic, I suppose, to lay the responsibility of this miserable state of affairs on my shoulders. However, we only aggravate it by talking. I want to give you a letter that Mrs. Vaughn put into my hands some time ago."

He brought the letter out of his pocket, and explained where it had been found, and why he had not given it to her before. Mrs. Dearborne's fingers twitched as she took the letter, and her face paled when she saw her name written in Mr. Vaughn's writing.

"Shall I read it for you?" Chauncey said, gently.

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"You are not well enough yet, mother, to be worried by business matters. The sight of Mr. Vaughn's writing has unnerved you. Let me read it for you."

"No!" she screamed, so sharply that he started. "Go out of the room," she added.

"Mother," he said, "it is probably a trifling matter."

"Will you go out of the room?" she repeated.

He obeyed her, but he stood close to the door listening, for he feared he knew not what. He heard her tear open the letter, he heard the rustle of paper, and then he heard a low, involuntary cry. In an instant he was at her side again. On the floor lay the torn envelope, and by it a second smaller envelope sealed likewise, and lying so that he could see the V stamped in the red wax. Mrs. Dearborne held a sheet of paper in her hand, and she crumpled it hastily when Chauncey came near to her.

"Mother," he said; then bent and picked up the sealed letter.

"Give that to me," she cried, and he handed it to her without so much as glancing at it. She slipped it into her pocket.

"I don't know why you intrude in this way," she said. "I don't want your help."

"I feared you were ill," he said.

"You hoped I was, you mean," she retorted.

"You know, mother, that I am not so unnatural," he said as he left the room once more.

There was a mystery; he was sure of it now. Something was weighing on his mother's mind—something beside what she called his infatuation.

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Obeying a sudden impulse he went back to her room. He did not cross the threshold, but stood in the door-way.

"Mother," he said, "you are keeping something from me, and I believe I ought to know what it is. Don't let this wretched quarrel go any further; take me into your confidence, let me help you. I am going away; I cannot stay here; but I don't want to leave you in anger. And don't plot against me, don't deceive me. I am afraid I could not forgive you very easily if I found that you were bent on wrecking my life."

She looked at him scornfully. "Did Miss Lester bid you try to conciliate me?" she said. Her words stung Chauncey, and he could not trust himself to speak. He went away without another word, and his mother locked the door before she read again the letter that seemed to have come from Mr. Vaughn's grave.

She saw the man drive Chauncey down the avenue, the travelling-satchel lying on the seat beside him. Kilo, who had been chained, howled dismally, and a sympathetic hound belonging to the Fanshawes howled in unison. Mrs. Dearborne closed the windows in a sort of distraction, and sent a servant out to free her son's disconsolate dog. She still held the letter in her hand, but she did not re-read it at once. At last she glanced at the top of the sheet, noted the date, then referred to a little book in which she kept account of such events as seemed to her worth recording. Here she had put down the day of Mr. Vaughn's death, and she saw that

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the letter was written the night before he died. He seemed to have had a foreboding that death was drawing near to him.

"I enclose a letter for Chauncey" (he wrote), "and you must give it to him at once, unless you prefer to tell him the contents yourself. You know what they are. I have not tried to excuse myself to him; I have confessed my blunder, but he will not hold me up to ridicule, and he will not act other than generously towards you. We can trust him. I write to-night because I blame myself for not having been more energetic in the matter, and I feel that there is not much time left for me to correct the mistakes of my old age. Give Chauncey the letter without delay. Believe me, Mrs. Dearborne,

"Respectfully yours,

"PHILIP VAUGHN."

She took the letter addressed to Chauncey, and held it a long time in her hand. When he read it he would know that she had been deceiving him for months; he would know that he had been kept out of what was lawfully his own. She shivered a little, and bit her nails anxiously; she would be at the mercy of a man whom she had goaded to desperation. A child's joyous laugh smote on her ear, and she went to the window that looked towards the cottage. Leila had gathered a hatful of bright-tinted autumn leaves and plaited them into a necklace for Kilo, which he wore with an air of long-suffering meekness. He had escaped from his bonds, and, like his master, sought consolation at the cottage. Carol stood by the dog, her hand resting on his head. She laughed at something Leila said, laughed softly, but her laughter was borne on the breeze to Mrs. Dearborne, who resented it as though it were an insult.

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She turned away from the window with an inarticulate cry, and the letter that was addressed to Chauncey she laid away in her desk.

That afternoon Mrs. Yelverton called on her, and she denied herself the luxury of solitude, but she greeted her guest with great weariness. "No, I am not well," she said in answer to Mrs. Yelverton's solicitous inquiry. "I am very far from well, and I think I shall go away somewhere for a change of air."

"You might go with Chauncey," Mrs. Yelverton said. "I hear he is about to start off on his travels again."

She pitied the poor, pale old woman, but her curiosity conquered her pity.

"Chauncey will not travel," Mrs. Dearborne said. "He may spend the winter with his uncle, Henry Dearborne. He is growing restless. We can hardly expect our sons to remain with us always."

Mrs. Yelverton did not stay long, but she managed in the course of half an hour to convey to Mrs. Dearborne some notion of the rumors that were afloat about Carol Lester. They were vague, yet they were damning; at least, they were damning to Mrs. Dearborne. She listened patiently, rousing herself only to say that she could not believe the stories were true. She found herself defending the girl whom she most distrusted and feared.

"Miss Lester is no adventuress," she said. "My daughter knows all about her. Miss Lester's mother was a friend of Mrs. Swanevelt. You know who she is. Her daughter is Mrs. Forbes, who has a country place on the North Park road."

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If Carol were to be her son's wife, the world should never know how Mrs. Dearborne felt about it, and Mrs. Yelverton went away with her faith in the scandalous reports terribly shaken. No sooner had she gone than Mrs. Dearborne dressed herself to go out. It was late in the afternoon when she stood on the porch, and the clock in the library chimed the half hour past five. She was resolved to see Carol; she would tell her some plain truths; yet she hesitated, and while she was hesitating Chauncey walked up to the house.

"What, are you back already?" she said.

"Back already," he repeated. "Where are you going?"

"Oh, only for a stroll."

"Then I will go with you," and he offered her his arm. They went down the street slowly, he telling her what his uncle had said. Henry Dearborne had extended the hand of friendship to his nephew, and it was arranged that Chauncey should go out to the iron-works as soon as he had sold his horses and boats.

"Oh, you must not leave me," Mrs. Dearborne said. "You must not go away so far."

"I could not stay here," he answered; "no, not if you gave me half your fortune."

Carol rode by them then. She bowed coldly, and Chauncey raised his hat.

"You mean," Mrs. Dearborne said, "that your wife would not like to live near me. Otherwise, I suppose you would stay here if I should give you half my fortune."

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He made no response; he hardly spoke again until he had taken his mother back to the house. That evening he went down to the heart of the town. The streets were thronged with people, for it was the Saturday night so dear to shop-girls and factory hands. They strolled about, talking and laughing loudly and jostling one another off the flagged sidewalks. There was to be some sort of a variety show at the theatre, and the band was stationed outside discoursing music that was to lure the passers-by to the entertainment. Chauncey made his way to the office of a livery-stable, and asked the men he met there if they knew of any one who wanted to buy a pair of road horses. They all talked about it with great earnestness; one or two related high-flavored anecdotes, but a third took Chauncey aside and told him in confidence of a man from New York who wanted a team. It was nauseous work to Chauncey. He was glad to escape from the close, ill-smelling little den into the fresh air.

The following day, after dinner, he ordered his horse, and rode away to see what arrangements he could make for getting rid of his boats. His mother watched him until he was out of sight, and then she dressed herself again to go to the cottage. She hardly dared to go, but she summoned up her courage and walked as swiftly as her trembling limbs would carry her towards the little blue-gray house, that now was half hidden by the scarlet leaves of the vines. Leila was out on the lawn. She saw Mrs. Dearborne, and ran to her and put up her cheek to be kissed, but Mrs. Dearborne did not note the mute invitation.

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She thrust her visiting-card into the child's hand, saying,

"Take that to Miss Lester."

Leila obeyed; she gave the card to Carol, who eyed it for a second, then rang for Annette.

"No," she said, "I will see her;" and when Annette entered, she bade her bring her a glass of water.

"I am afraid of that lady," Leila remarked. "She is all black."

"I am a little afraid of her, too," Carol said, as she left her room.

Mrs. Dearborne stood in the drawing-room; her sharp features were thrown in relief by the mass of crape she wore, and her face was of a grayish hue.

"I am sorry you have been so ill," Carol said. "Take this chair, Mrs. Dearborne."

"Thank you," murmured the widow, seating herself and listening to Carol's welcoming words without answering them. She had not come here to waste her time in idle talk. "I am quite well again," she said. "I understand that my son wants to marry you, Miss Lester. I had not thought that he was much in earnest about it until lately. Otherwise, I should have paid this call sooner."

Carol had nothing to say, and Leila, who had been peering into the room, now entered boldly. Her aunt rose, took her by the hand, and led her out, closing the door; then she came back to Mrs. Dearborne.

"Yes," she said, "your son has asked me to be his wife. I know very well that you are displeased with him, and I am sorry; but I am glad you have come,

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for I want you to tell me what it is that you have against me."

"You can understand," Mrs. Dearborne said, evasively, "that a mother is solicitous for her children's happiness. An unfortunate marriage has wrecked many a man's life, as perhaps you know."

Carol understood the allusion to Oliver Floyd, and bowed a little, resolving not to speak until she must.

"And," Mrs. Dearborne continued, "I have spent sleepless nights thinking of Chauncey. In marrying you, he marries a woman whom he has known but a short time, of whose antecedents and past life he is quite ignorant. He has conceived a boyish passion which is likely to pass away as suddenly as it came."

She paused again, and looked at Carol, whose eyes met hers bravely, but who spoke not a word, although her anger was rising, and the color flamed hot in her cheeks.

"You must let me add," said Mrs. Dearborne, at last, "that I should prefer my son not to marry you until he has learned to know you better."

"Mrs. Dearborne," said Carol, "you cannot say you know nothing of my past life, of my antecedents. Your daughter is acquainted with many people who not only know me, but have known my family for a long time. I shall not try to find favor in your eyes; I shall not try to win your regard. Had you made inquiries, you could have learned all that you wished to about me. It would have been fairer than to condemn me as you seem to condemn me. I do not understand why you were contented to let your unreasonable prejudices—"

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"Unreasonable?" cried Mrs. Dearborne, interrupting her.

"Yes; unreasonable, unjust, and absurd prejudices."

"Do you suppose," Mrs. Dearborne said, "that the people in this town are blind? Do you suppose that your conduct has not been remarked? You know well enough that my prejudices, as you call them, are not prejudices at all. I have watched you ever since you came—watched you closely."

She waited now for Carol to defend herself, but Carol stared at her in astonishment, and even smiled a little. That smile maddened Mrs. Dearborne.

"You came here without a friend, save a man whom no decent woman would have in her house," she continued; "but he was very much your friend until you found my son was weak enough to fall in love with you. I came to tell you this: if you marry my son, you make him a beggar. You may think that once you are married to him I will relent. Or you may think that if he sends you to me with his child in your arms I must relent. I will not. Not a penny of mine ever reaches you or yours."

Carol rose, touched the bell, and Annette answered the summons at once. The big, brawny Saxon stood in the door-way, looking anxiously at her mistress.

"Show madam out," said Carol, in very distinct English.

Mrs. Dearborne's expression changed. A purplish flush overspread her cheeks; she glanced from Carol to Annette, from Annette to Carol; then, with a deft movement of her hand, she drew her heavy black veil over her face, and left the house. When she gained

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her own room, she took Mr. Vaughn's letter to Chauncey from the desk and tried to tear it, but the thick paper resisted her impulse. She dared not try again; she put the letter back in the desk, and passed her cold hand over her moist brow. Through the opened window came the sound of horse's hoofs on the gravel. She looked out; she saw Chauncey riding slowly towards the house beneath the arching maples, whose leaves burned red in the September sunshine. He did not sit erect; he leaned forward a little, his head bowed and the reins hanging loose from his relaxed hand. The horse, like his master, looked wearied and dejected, and when Chauncey dismounted, he did not stroke Buckskin's neck, but gave the brute a light tap as he bade him go to the stable. Buckskin obeyed; he moved off, however, as he had come, at a spiritless gait, instead of galloping away joyously. Mrs. Dearborne heard Chauncey stop in the hall, and speak to one of the servants.

"Where is my mother?" he asked.

"I think she has just come in, sir," the servant answered, "but I am not sure. She went over to Blue Cottage a little while ago, and she may be there yet."

Chauncey came up the stairs quickly, and entered his mother's room, closing the door carefully behind him.

"You have been to see Miss Lester," he said. "Why did you go? What did you have to say to her?" He spoke sternly, but without anger, yet his tone made Mrs. Dearborne's face blanch. "Did you tell her that she was not worthy to be my wife?" he continued. "Oh, mother, you need not have put such

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an insult upon her. She has refused to marry me, and my money, or my lack of money, has nothing to do with it. She does not care for me; that is all."

"Refused you?" Mrs. Dearborne repeated.

"Yes, unconditionally. Are you satisfied?"

"She did not tell me that," Mrs. Dearborne said.

"Of course she did not tell you. It is for me to tell, and now you know it."

"Refused *you?*" Mrs. Dearborne echoed. "Does not care for you? She—she refused you?"

"Yes, refused me, sent me away, told me she did not want to listen to me. And you may be very sure that I shall not persecute her. After this—after what I suppose you have said to her, I could not blame her if she passed me by without a glance. Mother, have you gone mad?"

"Leave me alone," Mrs. Dearborne said; and when he had left her she sat down, still holding the sealed letter in her hands, and fingering it absently. She hardly stirred for an hour; she was lost in thought, and the furrows on her brow grew deep, and the lines of her face tense. She rose at last, only to lie down on the lounge, where she remained a long time, weeping softly.

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Chapter XXV.

It was on the first day of October that Oliver Floyd came to Newbroek. He did not go directly to Blue Cottage, but stopped at the hotel, where he secured a room and ate a wretched mid-day dinner; then mounted to his chamber, and prepared to enjoy a solitary cigar. From his chair by the window he commanded a view of the street that to-day wore an air of unwonted activity, for the sun shone bright, and all the world was out. There was a confectionery shop nearly opposite the hotel, its windows full of fascinating glass jars, and lads from the military schools of the town, glittering with gold braid and brass buttons, hovered near this shop, entering empty-handed and emerging laden down. Farmers, who had driven in from the back country to do their "trading," stalked hither and thither, followed by distracted wives and bewildered children. Fashionable Newbroek tripped by, walking with an air of great importance to nowhere in particular, and displaying on the way new autumn costumes. At the street corners rival venders of oranges had set up stands, and they cried their wares and chaffed each other with boisterous good-humor. A squat Italian deposited his hand-organ just beneath Floyd's window, and stolidly ground out a series of well-worn airs from operas, concluding with the eternal, "La

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donna è mobile." Floyd smiled when he heard it; then tossed his cigar aside and went down to the street. He strolled about aimlessly, meeting Mrs. Mott and Mrs. Benthuysen, who looked at him curiously, and turned to look again. A carriage approached, drawn by a fine pair of iron-gray horses, and with liveried coachman and footman on the box. It was Mrs. Forbes's carriage, and she and her mother, Mrs. Swanevelt, and Carol Lester were driving out together. They did not see Floyd, for they looked neither to the right nor the left as the carriage progressed slowly down the crowded street. Mrs. Forbes was well known to Newbroek as the wife of a rich New York man, the mistress of a fine house in town, and a beautiful country-place on the Hudson. It was remarked at more than one tea-table that evening that it was shameful the way gossip had maligned so sweet a woman as Miss Lester!

Floyd at last bent his steps in the direction of the cottage, but he went first to call on Mrs. Fanshawe, whom he was so fortunate as to find at home, performing the marital duty of nursing her husband. He was just ill enough to be cross, but he cheered up at the sight of Floyd.

"I told my wife the other day that I wanted you to come and pay us a visit," he said. "Better stop with us now, since you are here."

"By all means," chimed in Mrs. Fanshawe; but Floyd shook his head.

"I return to New York early to-morrow morning," he said. "Perhaps, later, I shall be able to

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run up and spend a day or two, but I am very busy just now."

He, however, accepted their invitation to dine with them that evening, and then Mrs. Fanshawe deserted her husband and took Floyd off for a spin behind her new ponies. She gave him an excellent dinner; Mr. Fanshawe brought out his best wines; and under the genial influence of a generous Burgundy, Floyd's stiff, constrained manner disappeared. He became gay and confident, and when towards eight o'clock he bade his entertainers good-evening, his eyes were bright, and a smile lit up his face. He crossed the road with a quick, nervous step; he lifted the latch of the cottage-gate, and then he paused. The sky was crowded with stars; the wind was rising, and suggested a possible shower. From the library-window of the cottage streamed a bright ray of light that cut a path through the lawn. Floyd stole softly up to the window and looked in. Carol sat alone by the shaded lamp, a book in her lap, but she was not reading. Resting her cheek in her palm, her head bowed a little, and a tiny line showing itself between her brows, she sat there thinking. Her face was troubled, and as Floyd looked he saw the troubled expression give way to a sad one, and her lips quiver. As though conscious of her weakness, she rose, letting the book fall to the floor, and walked about the room for an instant; then approached the window that looked to the north. She drew back the curtain, and stood there motionless, gazing out absently.

Floyd rang the bell, and Annette, who came to

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the door, showed him into the library with scant ceremony.

"Ah, Mr. Floyd," said Carol, "I hardly looked for you this evening, although I did not suppose you would desert us altogether. You have been very busy, I dare say, during these past weeks—too busy to spend any time in unprofitable visiting. Aunt Mil will be glad to see you. She asked me the other day to write and bid you come here, if it were only to spend a Sunday."

"And why didn't you write?" he said. He had not seated himself, but stood before her, looking down at her as she leaned back in one of those low, cushioned chairs that women like so well.

She smiled at his question and glanced upward. "Because I was sure you would come," she answered. "Now that you are here, be comfortable; take that leather chair. Men always choose a leather chair, I notice; and you may smoke if you want to, and perhaps Aunt Mil will play chess with you by-and-by. Then you will feel like a domestic character. You know you said once that you always felt like a domestic character when you were here."

He drew forward the leather chair, but he did not take out a cigar.

"Aunt Mil went to her room to get one of her pet novels," Carol continued. "No one would ever suppose it, but she loves stories and romances, and above all, German novels. They are too sentimental for me."

"And what are you reading?" he asked. She gave him the book, and he glanced at the title. "Ah, French, and George Sand!" he exclaimed.

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"Yes," she said, "the only novel of George Sand's I ever read; and this is hardly a novel. It is an idyl."

Floyd opened the book. On the page where the title appeared, "La Mare au Diable," was written Chauncey Dearborne's name. "Humph," he said, "and so Prince Dearborne sends you this sort of thing?"

"Did you ever read it?" she asked, and he shook his head. "Then don't sit in judgment on it," she added.

"Or on Prince Dearborne," he said, with a laugh.

"Or on Chauncey Dearborne," she echoed. "I must send the book back to-morrow. He leaves here in a day or two."

Floyd's hand went up to his mustache quickly. "Leaves here?" he repeated. "Poor fellow!"

"He does not need your pity," Carol said.

"Won't you miss him a little? I know that you and he have seen a good deal of each other since you came here to live. What drives him away? I thought that he was done with wandering; but I suppose he is going forth to shoot more lions in Africa, tigers in India, and write more books about his exploits."

"There is nothing dishonorable in all that," Carol said. "If he chooses to travel, he is free to travel. And wherever he goes and whatever he does, he will always be a gentleman, a man of honor. You may curl your lip when you speak of him, Mr. Floyd, but your sneer is unworthy of you."

"No, it is quite worthy of me," he rejoined. "I

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wish I had so good an advocate as Mr. Dearborne has —so staunch an ally."

"It is your theory that what a man deserves he gets in this world," Carol said. He winced a little. "You see," she added, "that I have an excellent memory."

"The theory is sound enough—and therefore Mr. Dearborne has a defender in you, and I a judge."

"A judge?" she repeated. "I should never presume to weigh you in a balance."

"You have done it already," he said. "I am not thick-skinned; I am sensitive to the least, lightest touch of disdain."

Mrs. Milinowski now entered the room. She looked at Floyd closely as she shook hands with him, and she saw that he wore a dark-red scarf, and that his gold watch-chain had not given way to a decorous black one. His face was flushed, his eyes glistened when he spoke to her, and a nervous smile played about his lips. She eyed him with evident disapproval, and he grew a little uneasy beneath her silent scrutiny. She asked him no questions—she was too much the gentlewoman to do that; but her whole bearing was at once a mute question and a condemnation. He waited for her to speak. Carol had risen and stood beside Mrs. Milinowski, and Floyd faced them both. The pause lasted not a minute; but such a pause is not to be measured by the busy ticking of a clock. At last Mrs. Milinowski seated herself in a rigid, high-backed chair and folded her hands in her lap.

"I am very glad to see you," she said. "I began to think we should never see you or hear from you

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again; but Carol insisted that you would come to Newbroek some day."

"Miss Lester has more faith in my devotion than you," he returned.

"Oh yes, Carol was sure you would come," Mrs. Milinowski repeated.

"As Mr. Floyd is good enough to look after our affairs for us," said Carol, "I knew I was safe in saying that he would not desert us altogether."

"But where is your portmanteau?" Mrs. Milinowski asked.

"At the hotel," he answered. "I would not trespass on your hospitality this time, for I came up only for the evening, and I go back very early to-morrow morning."

Mrs. Milinowski protested, and commanded him to send for his portmanteau and spend the night at the cottage, but he was firm in his refusal. She drew forward the chess-table, after a little desultory talk.

"We must have one game," she said. He submitted without a murmur, but he played badly, so badly that Mrs. Milinowski stared at him first in surprise, then in vexation. Carol sat by, watching them. The evening was warm; the windows stood open, and the curtains fluttered in the rising wind. A wandering breeze lifted Carol's light, waving hair from her brow, and Floyd, who glanced towards her, paused, his hand resting on his queen, and looked at her intently. She was conscious of his gaze, and met it with a smile. His face flushed; he scrutinized the position of the chessmen for a full minute, and finally moved his queen.

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"Mr. Floyd!" said Mrs. Milinowski, in tones of horror; then she made a move. "Checkmate," she added, solemnly.

Carol laughed softly. "Chess enough for this even ing," she said.

"There is a great gale of wind blowing through here," Floyd remarked; and rising, he closed the window that looked to the north. He could see the lights of the Dearborne house shining out, and as he looked, a light in an upper room vanished.

"There is no view from that window," Mrs. Milinowski said, "but Carol always sits by it. Isn't her work-basket there now? She sat there all the afternoon."

"Yes," Floyd answered. He picked up the basket, a pretty little trifle, with scarlet ribbons drawn through it, and brought it to the table. He took out the thimble, he opened the needle-book, he fingered the balls of worsted, and finally he found a band of silk with the initials O. F. stamped on it. The first letter was already worked in, the second had not been begun.

"Carol was going to make something for you, but she did not finish it," Mrs. Milinowski explained.

He glanced towards her. "May I have this as it is?" he asked, and she nodded.

"You had better let her finish it," Mrs. Milinowski said.

"I am afraid she never would," he remarked, as he put the bit of silk into his breast-pocket. "Would you?" he added, turning towards her suddenly.

"Would I embroider the other letter? Certainly," she answered.

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"No," he said, "I will keep it as it is. It is typical to me. Everything seems to break off; nothing comes quite to its promised completion."

Mrs. Milinowski touched the bell. "Annette, bring some sherry and biscuit," she said. Then Carol laughed again under her breath. The clock struck the half hour past ten while they were tasting the sherry and crumbling the biscuit, and Kilo, the mastiff, walked in through the front window that had been left open.

"Mr. Dearborne isn't very far away," Mrs. Milinowski said, sagely. Carol gave Kilo a biscuit, and she rested her hand on the dog's head while he crunched the crisp morsel between his teeth. He put his paw on her knee pleadingly.

"What, do you want more, Kilo?" she said.

"He wants all," said Floyd. But a shrill whistle broke the silence that followed this remark, and Kilo, with one reluctant glance towards the plate of biscuit, trotted off as he had come.

Mrs. Milinowski kept to her post until eleven o'clock struck, and then she boldly said she was sleepy. "Good-night, Mr. Floyd," she added. "If we were in Germany, I suppose I should have to stay, but in America a woman can go to bed when she pleases. I hope to see you again before long. Perhaps the next time we play chess, you won't give me your queen."

She no sooner had left the room than Floyd drew his chair close to Carol's.

"You have lost all faith in me, I suppose," he said.

"Why should I have lost all faith in you?" she returned.

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"Because you know that I deceived you. I don't need to ask any questions; I saw that you knew; your whole manner showed it. And how could you help knowing?"

"Why didn't you tell me?" she said. "In the very beginning—"

"Yes, in the very beginning," he exclaimed; "but how could I know in the very beginning that I was to love you? I learned to love you little by little; I tried not to; I kept away from you a score of times when I was hungry for the sound of your voice. But I was too weak after all. I could not fight it down; I must see you, I must be near you— Oh, a girl like you knows nothing of that!"

He rose, and with clenched, trembling hands stood before her.

"I am not a boy," he went on, in a husky voice. "I have had such an experience as would make some men hate the sight of a woman. I thought I was through with love—I thought that belonged to the past, along with all the other madness of my youth. And now, I—I—a man— Oh, the fools may say what they like, but when a man loves a woman as I love you, and loses her, life has no sweetness in it for him."

"Why were you not honest with me?" she said, coldly.

"Would it have made a difference?" he asked.

"How can I tell?" she answered. "You would not have been the same man in my eyes."

"And now I am a very contemptible man in your eyes," he exclaimed. "Give me this much credit: I

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never did tell you that I loved you. You knew it; I was sure of that, but I kept myself in check—then! I ought not to speak of it to you." He sat down beside her and looked at her longingly. "To think," he added, with a wavering little smile—"to think that I do not dare so much as touch your hand!"

She held out her hand to him. "I am not so angry with you as I ought to be, perhaps," she said. "I am only very sorry."

"You don't quite despise me for my weakness?"

"I have not forgotten how kind you were to us. I shall never forget that. No one knows of this but you and me; no one ever shall know—"

"Not the man you marry?" he said.

She forced a smile. "I don't think I shall be married for a long time, if I ever am."

"I don't understand," he exclaimed.

"It is not necessary that you should, Mr. Floyd," Carol said, and she rose as she spoke. He remained seated, and looked up at her dully; then he said,

"You want me to go? Well, I suppose I must. I shall not come again. That would be impossible. And I will send you some decent man who will look after your business affairs for you. They are all in order now. You really don't need me." He passed his hand slowly over his mustache, and looked about the room. "After all," he added, "you have given me back my faith in women. I wonder, though, if there be another woman in the world so sweet and pure and good as you are. No, I don't believe it. I am too old to believe that."

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She followed him to the door. "It is a lovely night," she said.

"Yes, a lovely night," he echoed. "And there is one other thing, Carol, that I want to say to you before I go. If you ever should come to think better of me— Oh, you must not put me down as a weak, pitiful fellow! My only fault was that I loved you, and a woman might forgive that."

"And I do forgive you," she said.

"What was I going to tell you?" he asked himself. "Well, it could not have been much—a poor, paltry excuse for staying another minute beside you."

He took a step forward. Down in the road, that lay white at the foot of the lawn, a man walked to and fro slowly. Carol drew a quick breath, and stepping out on the porch, she strained her eyes to see in the dim starlight. Floyd stood beside her in silence for a second, then he grasped her hand.

"Must I go?" he said.

"Yes."

"Oh, no, no!" he cried. "Carol, I know I could make you happy. No man will ever love you as I do—no man would watch over you so tenderly as I. Listen to me. You could learn to trust me—"

"I could not," she said, trying to free herself; but he held her fast.

"I could prove myself to you," he went on. "I could teach you to care for me a little, Carol. No, I will not let you go." His hold on her wrist tightened, and he came closer to her. "You shall not leave me—you shall not send me away. Promise me that you will let me try to redeem myself;

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promise me." She tried again to free herself, but he drew her towards him. "Promise me," he repeated.

"Chauncey!" she cried, sharply, and the figure in the white road stopped at the cottage-gate. "Chauncey!" she cried again, and now Floyd released her. He walked down the path slowly in the shadow of the trees, while Chauncey Dearborne ran over the lawn to Carol.

"You called me," he said, his breath coming quick and hard.

"Yes, I called you," she answered, softly.

"Give me your hand," he said, and she obeyed him. He led her into the library, and looked at her without a word, still holding her trembling hand. She stood before him, silent, her bosom heaving and the color mounting slowly to her cheeks. She raised her head, and he saw a mute entreaty in her eyes. With a quick gesture he pressed her close to him, then bent over her, and she lifted her face to receive his kiss.

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Chapter XXVI.

"Mother," said Chauncey, the next morning, "I want five minutes' conversation with you." He offered her his arm, and led her into the library. "I have something to tell you," he went on. She seated herself, and looked up at him inquiringly. "Miss Lester has promised to be my wife."

"In spite of everything?" Mrs. Dearborne murmured.

"In spite of everything."

"I thought she refused you."

"She did — once. I said I would not ask her again—" Chauncey broke off suddenly. "But she has promised," he added. "She knows everything; she knows that you—that you— Oh, mother, you must be civil to her. I do not ask more than that of you."

"And you are still quite determined to leave here?"

"More determined than ever. And I shall go as soon as I have sold my horses. There was a man from New York looking at them yesterday, and I think he will buy them."

He asked no favors at his mother's hands; he gave her no chance to be generous.

"Suppose," she said—"suppose I should double your allowance? It would be quite enough to marry

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on—ten times as much as your father and I had. Then you could have the farm. Of course I could not expect you to live here in my house, but you would not be very far away."

"Thank you," he said.

"And you will stay!" she exclaimed. "What will you do there in Pennsylvania with Henry Dearborne?—in that smoky little village where there is not a soul you could make a friend of? And Henry is not a man you would ever like. He thinks of nothing but money."

"I don't think of much else myself," Chauncey remarked.

"Then you will stay here?" she asked, eagerly; but he shook his head. "Why not?" she added. "You cannot in years make half so large an income as I will give you."

"Yes, I know that."

"But you refuse to accept anything from me?"

"It is a hard thing to say, mother, but you see I could not take an allowance from you after all that has happened. I should always be wondering when you would be displeased with me and stop supplies."

He raised his eyebrows in a deprecatory way and smiled, but Mrs. Dearborne shrank back as though he had menaced her with a blow.

"Oh, my son," she cried, "you cannot trust your own mother!"

"It isn't quite that," he went on, hastily. He knelt beside her, and put his arm about her. "I am sorry if I have hurt you. Still, I know I should

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never be happy taking your money. And then, I am afraid I should have no wife if I consented to your plan. There is such a thing as pride left, you know. Even I have a little pride; I must be master of my own fortune."

He left her without saying any more, and walked towards the town. On the way he fell in with Mrs. Thorpe and Mary Yelverton, who stopped him. They let their parasols drop on their shoulders, forming backgrounds for their faces, and they spoke with great earnestness, Mrs. Thorpe taking the lead.

"Oh, Mr. Dearborne, I am so glad we met you. I told Mr. Thorpe that I wanted to see you, and he promised to ask you to come to the house, but he must have forgotten it."

"I gave my brother a similar commission," said Miss Yelverton.

"I feel immensely flattered," Chauncey said, smiling impartially on them both. "What can I do for you?"

Mrs. Thorpe twirled her parasol, and giggled a little. "We want you to be extremely diplomatic. We want you to find out why Miss Lester resigned from the tennis club. We were all rather — well, piqued, you know. It was as if she had said that she had tried us, and found us not to her fancy."

"We put her in the dramatic club yesterday," added Miss Yelverton. "And we put you in, too, Mr. Dearborne."

"Oh, thank you. I have not received any official notice yet. So you want me to be diplomatic? I am afraid I should be abominably clumsy; I have

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no tact, no delicacy. Women have tact. Why do you not call on Miss Lester, and tell her the truth? give diplomacy the go-by."

"I am afraid," said Mrs. Thorpe, with the frankness that her friends considered engaging.

"Oh, Miss Lester will roar as gently as a—a—dove," he exclaimed. "Here comes Mrs. Geoffrey Forbes," he added. "I don't know her, do you?"

Mrs. Thorpe and Miss Yelverton shook their heads as Mrs. Forbes's carriage passed.

"She is going to see Miss Lester, I suppose," said Miss Yelverton. "We might go there this afternoon, Fanny."

Mrs. Thorpe again declared that she was afraid, and she and Miss Yelverton walked on, conversing earnestly, and denouncing the scandal-mongers of the town. Chauncey went to the post-office, did a few errands, and then retraced his steps to the house. At the luncheon table he told his mother that he should not dine at home that evening.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

He frowned. "Oh, I don't mind saying that I shall dine next door, but I hope you won't ask me which next door I mean. And this afternoon I shall be agreeably occupied in trying to sell my horses."

"I will buy them," said his mother.

"I think I can make a *bona fide* sale," he answered. "The New York man I am going to drive out this afternoon wants them."

"Why will you not sell them to me, Chauncey? I will pay for them."

"So will the New York—if he buys them. But

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he is like everybody else; he wants a thousand dollar pair for half what they are worth. He won't get them."

She gazed at him with a little smile of wonder. "Oh, Chauncey," she exclaimed, "you looked so like your father then—when you spoke just then!" The tears sprang to her eyes, but she controlled herself in an instant. "You will dine with Miss Lester?" she added, coldly.

"Yes," he answered. "I must speak to Mrs. Milinowski, but I know I shall put it off until the day before I leave. I am afraid of her."

He said this without regard to Mary MacElroy and the servants. They were free to imagine anything they liked.

"Shall I order the carriage for you, mother?" he said, as he rose from the table. "I am going out to the stable."

"No, I shall not drive to-day," she answered. "I don't feel well enough. Give me your arm, Chauncey, and help me to my room."

She leaned on him heavily, for care and illness had done their work, touching her hair with silver, and bowing her shoulders. She no longer carried herself erect; she no longer walked with a light, quick step, and her voice had grown feeble. When she sat down in her own room, she saw that Chauncey's face was sad.

"Oh, mother," he said, softly, as he kissed her, "need all this have come to you like a terrible misfortune?"

"No," she whispered; but he had turned away, and

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did not hear the word she spoke. She sat near the window, and she waited until she saw him drive off—waited until he had been gone a full half hour, and then she walked to her desk. She drew a sheet of paper towards her; she wrote these lines:

"DEAR MISS LESTER,—Will you be kind enough to come and see me this afternoon, as soon as you can conveniently? I hardly feel able to leave the house, or I would come to you; but I think you will not refuse the request that Chauncey's mother makes."

So much was written slowly, almost painfully, but Mrs. Dearborne reflected before she signed her name. She signed it at last without prefixing any customary avowal of faithfulness or sincerity or truth or affection, and then she sent the note to the cottage by a servant. She resumed her post by the window, and she saw the servant enter the cottage and come out. It was not long after that Carol appeared on the porch, where she paused to speak to Leila. She stooped to kiss the child before she left her, and Mrs. Dearborne smiled grimly, for she understood. The two women met in the staid, decorous library, and greeted each other with outward calmness.

"I sent for you, Miss Lester, because I want you to do something for me," Mrs. Dearborne said, directly. "Give this to Chauncey," and she brought out the letter that Mr. Vaughn had written. "When he reads it," Mrs. Dearborne went on, "he will hate me; he will know that I have not acted towards him as I should. And I want you to intercede for me."

She struggled to speak calmly, but her voice broke. She looked very pitiful as she sat there, striving to

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master herself, her face working, her lips quivering, and Carol went towards her.

"Mrs. Dearborne," she said, gently, "I am glad if I can do anything for you."

The pale, trembling old woman looked up in the fresh young face that was so full of sympathy and tenderness. "I misjudged you," she murmured. "I thought that you did not care for Chauncey; but you must care—and, then—"

"Hush," Carol said. "I cannot blame you for misjudging me. You spoke cruel words to me, Mrs. Dearborne—"

"But you will forget them?" Mrs. Dearborne asked.

"For Chauncey's sake," Carol answered, and she stood irresolute; then added: "You know that I will do all I can for you—but I hardly understand what you wish."

"It is all in the letter," Mrs. Dearborne said. She was composed now, and spoke firmly. "I have committed a grievous fault," she continued, "but only you and Chauncey need know. If he can forgive me— Oh, tell him I have been the most miserable woman in the world! Perhaps he will be generous enough—perhaps, to forgive me."

"I am sure of it," Carol said.

"I do not want mere lip service from him," Mrs. Dearborne cried, bitterly. "I want him to be to me as he was before you came."

Carol's face burned at this. "I am sorry I brought unhappiness to you," she said.

"I brought it on myself. Give him the letter;

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you read it with him. It will make a great difference; he can do as he pleases then; he can be master of his own fortune, and that is what he wishes. He will not need to go away, and try to make a fortune for himself; he need not accept a penny from me. It will be for him to take his own, and it will be for him to decide whether he will involve me and his brother and sister in trouble, or act generously by us. I do not understand the law, but I know that he can work great mischief if he likes."

"He will do what is right," Carol said.

"And if he does what is right," Mrs. Dearborne added, "his share will be enough. You do not understand, do you? You will when you read the letter."

She spoke wearily, and Carol held out her hand. "I will leave you now, Mrs. Dearborne. I am glad you sent for me."

Mrs. Dearborne took her hand; she held it a moment in silence, smiling sadly. "If I come to your house again, Miss Lester, shall I be welcome?"

"Always," Carol answered.

Mrs. Dearborne went with her to the door, but she did not pretend to feel any sudden affection for the girl who was to be her son's wife. She had nerved herself to do and say what she ought; she could not act as though a new love had suddenly sprung up in her heart, and she let Carol go from her without a kiss or a caress. There was nothing more for her to do but wait with folded hands for Chauncey's coming. He would know that it was for him as though his father had made no will, and he would know that

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his mother had kept the truth from him. He could claim a great share of the estate; he could carry the will into the courts; he could harass his mother and his brother and sister, unless he were content with only such portion as would fall to him on his mother's death. If a wish for revenge took possession of him, it lay in his power to torment her who had tormented him.

The afternoon wore away. Chauncey drove his horses into the stable, changed his dress, and went over to the cottage. Mrs. Dearborne came to the dinner-table, but she ate nothing, and she soon went up to her own room, where she sat alone in the gathering darkness. The twilight drifted by at last, and the stars began one by one to shine in the blue-black sky. Mrs. Dearborne started when a servant came in with a lighted lamp, but she said nothing, only watched the servant draw the shades down before the windows, and straighten a rug that lay askew. She was alone again, and she hardly stirred until she heard the click of a key in the hall-door. She heard Chauncey's step, she heard him come quickly up the stairs. She did not rise; she bowed her head and hid her face in her hands. He came into the room, and put his arms about her gently. "My poor mother," he said.

THE END.

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